Future

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX
PRESENTS

DIGITAL Painting

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR TODAY'S ARTISTS

PHOTOSHOP STILL LIFE

*Depict light and texture with **Damien Mammoliti***

HOW TO BE A PORTRAIT ARTIST

***Jane Radstrom** reveals how to capture personality in your art*

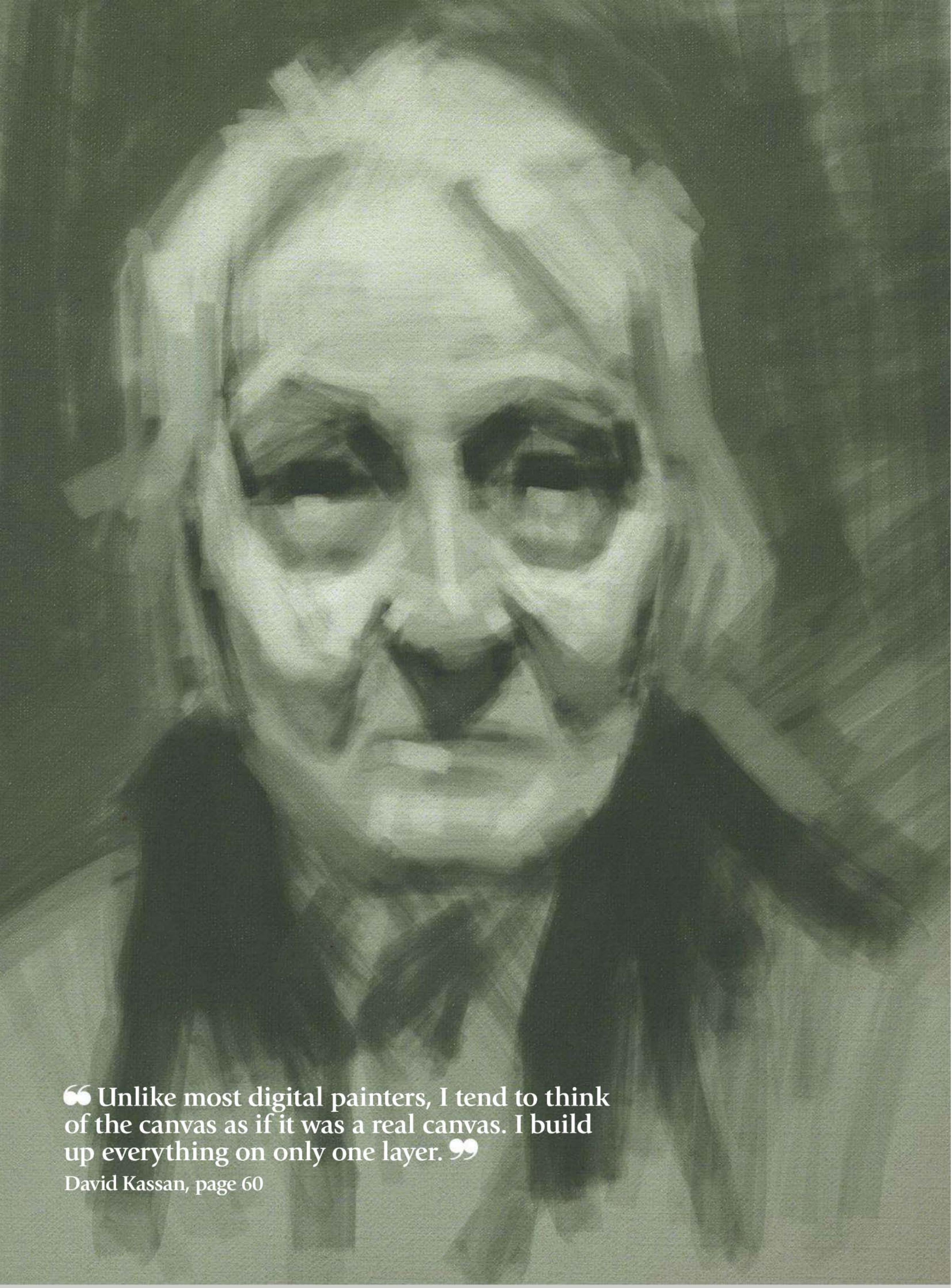
FREE VIDEO LESSONS
+ CUSTOM BRUSHES
TUTORIAL FILES
AND MORE…

74 PAGES OF IN-DEPTH WORKSHOPS

Master the essential digital art techniques to paint from life

DAVID KASSAN

Discover how to paint like a modern master



“Unlike most digital painters, I tend to think of the canvas as if it was a real canvas. I build up everything on only one layer.”

David Kassan, page 60

DIGITAL Painting

Welcome…

Digital painting is the new expression in art. Just as Monet picked up a paint tube, packed a box easel and explored his world, so too are modern artists reaching for a tablet and leaving the studio. Learning to paint from what's in front of you is an essential skill. Discovering how to observe a figure or landscape, control the light and paint with limited brushes and strokes are techniques we all need to master.

To encourage us all to pick up the stylus and explore new artistic techniques we've gathered some of the best digital painters in the business, many are traditional painters who fit tablets into their workflow, such as our cover artist Jane Radstrom who replicates her pastel and oil approach in Photoshop. There's more portrait techniques from the award-winning David Kassan who works in digital charcoal.

We'll also reveal how you can take your first steps in digital plein air painting, first with our hardware and app advice starting on page 20 and then in workshops from Olly Lawson (page 48) and Kan Muftic (page 56) and tips on painting realism from leading art director Robh Ruppel on page 64.

This is only scratching the surface in an issue filled with advice on digital still life painting, sketching a figure on iPad and much more. Turn the page and start your new journey in digital painting…

Ian

Ian Dean, Editor
ian@imaginefx.com

From the makers of
FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX

We're the only magazine dedicated to fantasy and sci-fi art. Our aim is to help artists to improve both their traditional and digital art skills. Visit www.imaginefx.com to find out more!

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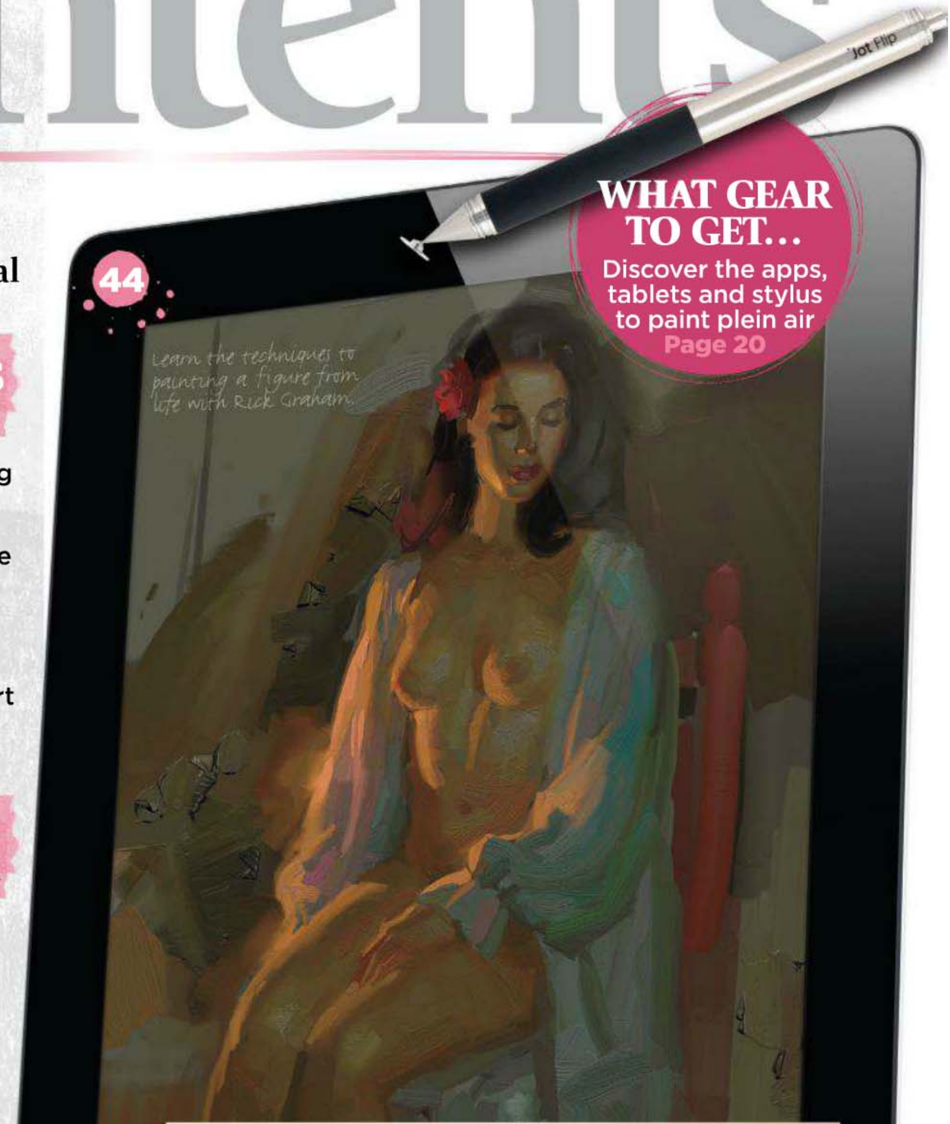

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Learn the techniques to painting a figure from life with Rick Graham.

WHAT GEAR TO GET…
Discover the apps, tablets and stylus to paint plein air
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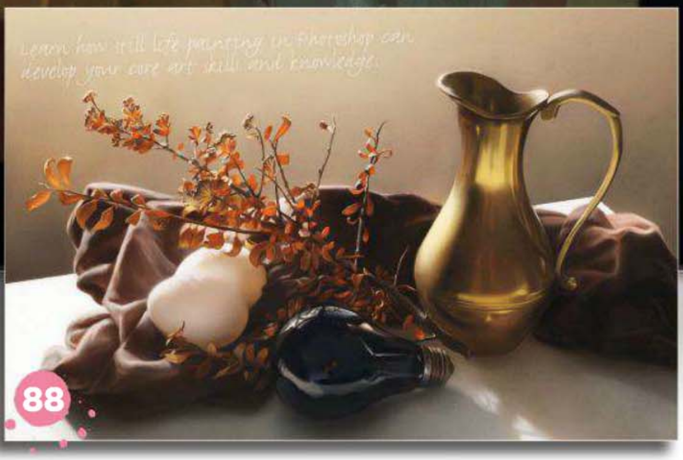

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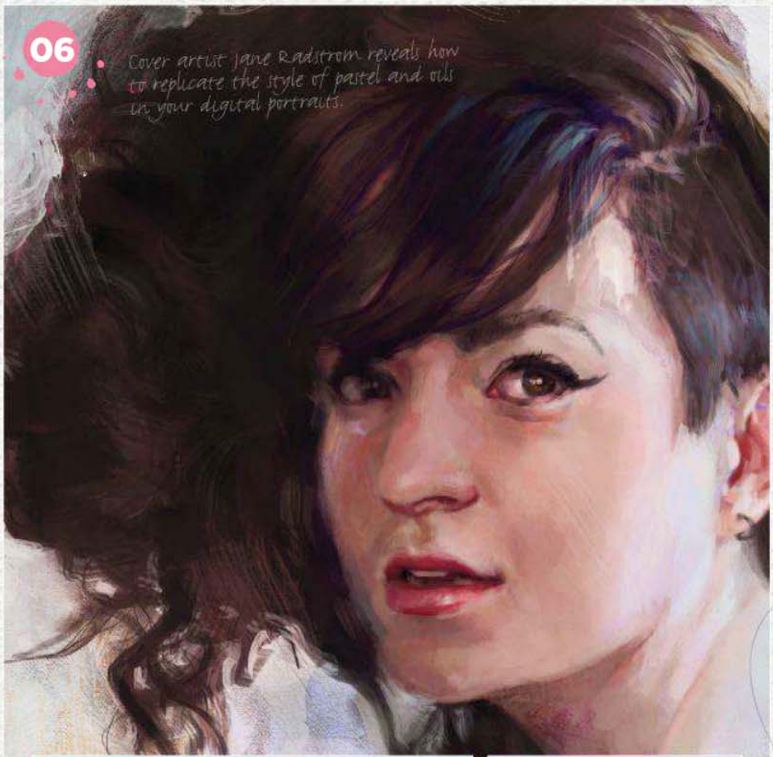
Award-winning artist David Kassan paints on the new Sony Duo.

Subscribe to ImagineFX today and save money off every issue! See page 28

The Gallery

14 Inspirational artists
Technology and imagination combine to create astonishing new art, read the interviews!



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Quick techniques to better art

Remko Troost
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Jace Wallace
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Lauren K Cannon
The technique to painting flying birds is revealed by book illustrator Lauren K Cannon in her simple advice.

Matt Dixon
Emulate the look and feel of acrylic and oil paints using Photoshop with pin-up artist Matt Dixon.

Mélanie Delon
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Donglu Yu
Bring your landscapes to life with Donglu Yu's secrets for painting the look of mist and fog.

USING YOUR VIDEO AND RESOURCE FILES

Sketches and videos to help you learn at the tap of a finger…

Video workshops
Follow video workshops from Marta Dahlig and Damien Mammoliti for key digital art techniques, or Jane Radstrom's portrait painting workshop to discover how to achieve a pastel and oil look in your art.

Resource files
View Rob Ruppel's incredible LA paintings to follow his methods.

Reference images
Use all our hi-res workshop files to reference and learn from.

If you see this, click the link or note it down to access the workshop resource files!

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/life-2

WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/dp-life

If you see this badge on the page, there's a video to watch! Click the link or note down the address to watch the workshop video.

VIDEO WORKSHOP
CLICK THE LINK TO VIEW THE VIDEO

Photoshop

PAINT A PORTRAIT WITH PERSONALITY

Jane Radstrom shows you how to create a portrait which draws the viewer in with an engaging mood and sense of personality

A contemporary realist painter living in Austin, Texas, Jane Radstrom is known for her pastel and mixed media portraits and figurative art. Her work is shown in galleries across the US.

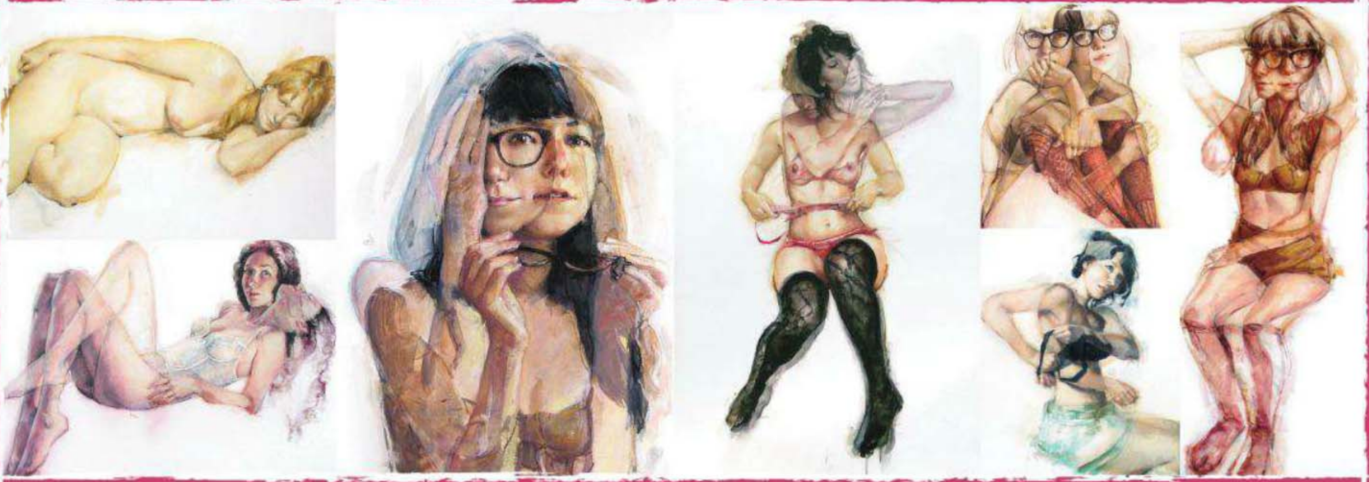
"I started out wanting to capture women in candid, intimate moments," says Jane, who says she is careful not to sexualise the image but present portraits of women in everyday, sensual poses. "I want the poses to be natural and express the personality of the model. I don't idealise or 'improve' their bodies. I'm examining the line between beauty and objectification."

About two years ago Jane had a breakthrough in her art when she switched from oil and acrylic paints to Nupastels. Working on smooth paper Jane then achieves a loose, gestural tone to her paintings by melting the pastel strokes with Gamsol (odourless paint thinner). Her portraits are enhanced by adding oil paint and wax.

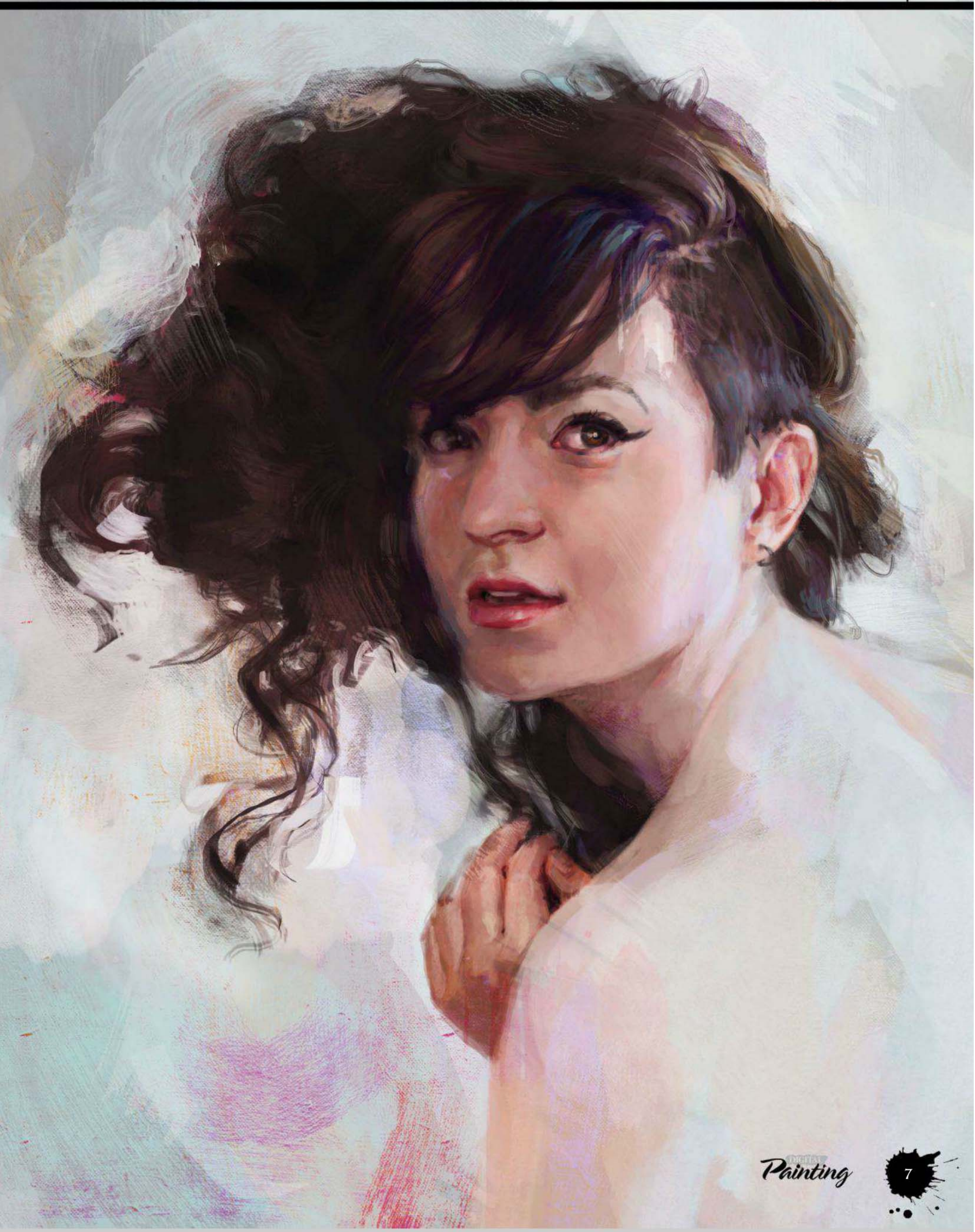
Jane's portraits demand to be seen as much for her ability to capture a subject as for her style. "People are so complicated," says the artist, explaining: "There are a hundred ways to smile, and each one means something different. It's really fascinating. People use body language to express themselves in ways that they are not even aware of. Painting the human form, I get to explore those unspoken statements."

In her new Double Exposure series Jane takes long exposure photos of models between poses on a camera. "I quickly found that by layering two different expressions, I could show more nuanced personality in one image."

Turn the page and see how Jane emulates her style in Photoshop.



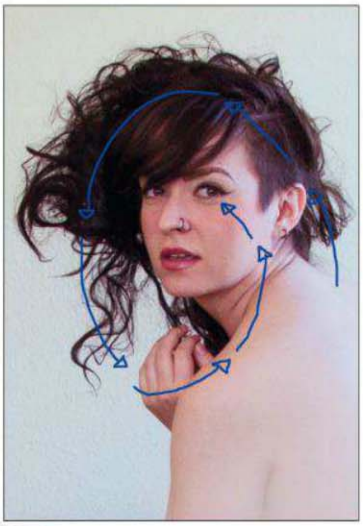
DOUBLE EXPOSURE SERIES
Painted wth pastels, oil paint and sometimes wax medium, Jane says these pieces are inspired by photographic effects and the manipulation of exposure to create images that look 'real' but contain more than a single still image.



DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/dp-cover2

The subject for my painting is Cassandra. She has a striking dark mass of hair, which contrasts with the muted palette of her skin. I am especially interested in the warm and cool light on her face, and the warm tone's glow against a cold background. For a portrait, this pose is an unusual choice. She is looking back over her shoulder, and seems caught in the act of something. This candid quality gives the portrait emotion that is subtle rather than theatrical. Realism lives in the nuances of these natural moments. By deciding in advance exactly what I like about the reference – the colour, lighting, and expression – I've set myself up to make good decisions for bringing those aspects out along the way.

With traditional painting, there are plenty of opportunities for 'happy accidents', unexpected effects that add something to the final image. Painting digitally can be so controlled so there is no room for serendipity. In my digital process, I go out of my way to look for accidents. Lost edges, colours peeking through, a wide variety of textures and a general sense of controlled mayhem combine to create a compelling image that is all the more interesting for lacking in a bit of polish.



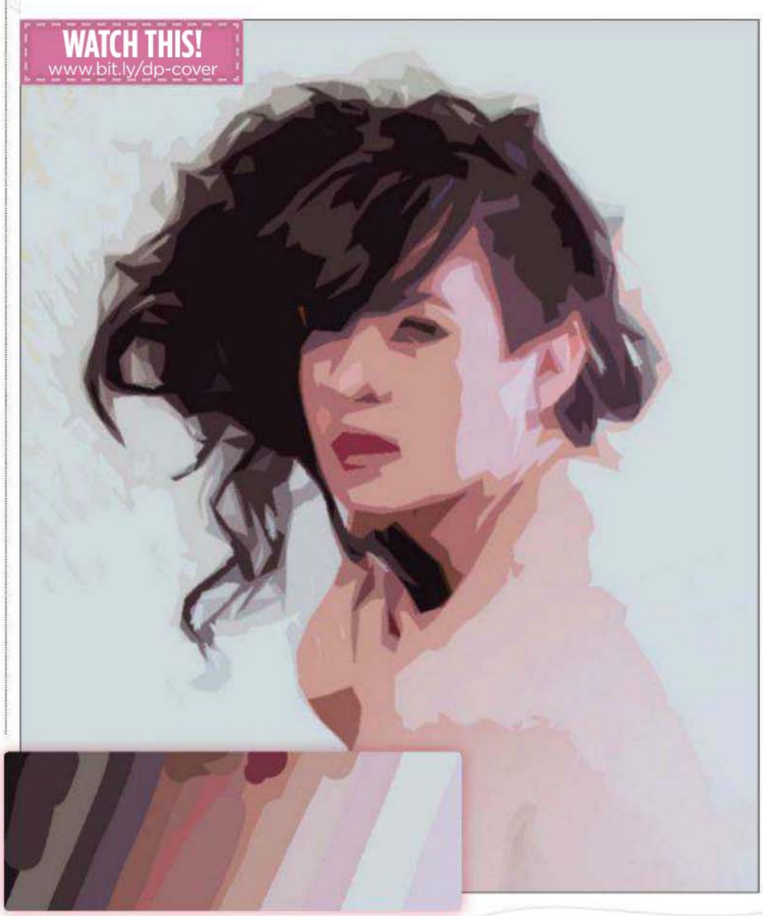
1 Subject

Good reference is the foundation for your painting. I set up a photoshoot with Cassandra at a time when lots of natural light comes in through the windows. This creates a beautiful soft contrast between the indoor warm lights and a bright bleached daylight. In the photo that I choose for this portrait, her back and hair provide framing for the face, which leads the eye in a spiral around the portrait.

2 Colour palette

In order to get the basic shapes down quickly, I prepare a palette to colour pick from. In this case, I am enchanted with the lighting and I want to stay close to it. If I colour pick right from the photo, the grain and noise get in the way, so I use a little digital cheat: applying Photoshop's cutout filter to simplify the photo into flat colours (Filter>Artistic>Cutout). This basic palette is a good jumping off point, and I can add more colours later.

WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/dp-cover



3 Squint

It is tempting to get caught up in the nuances of the eyes, or the texture of the hair, but these are best reserved for later. Build from simple to complex. To see the basic shapes squint at the photo so the details are fuzzy. This shows the most important information – if you can't see it, it's not essential for initial structure.

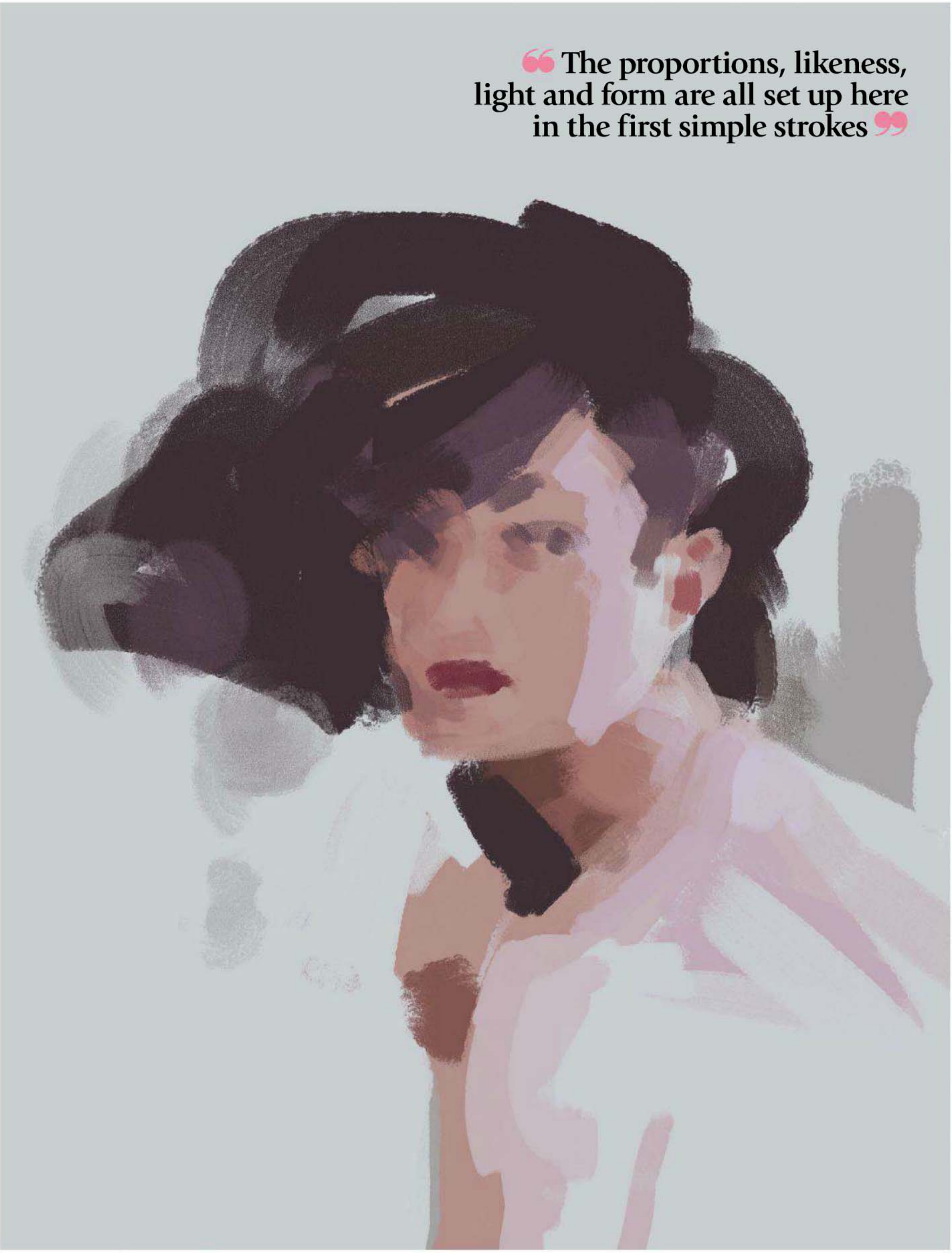
4 Basic shapes

Blocking in the basic shapes is the most important part of the painting. This lays the foundation for everything to come – the proportions, likeness, light and form are all set up here in the first simple strokes. I use a large brush for my first pass, which prevents me from getting caught up in the details.

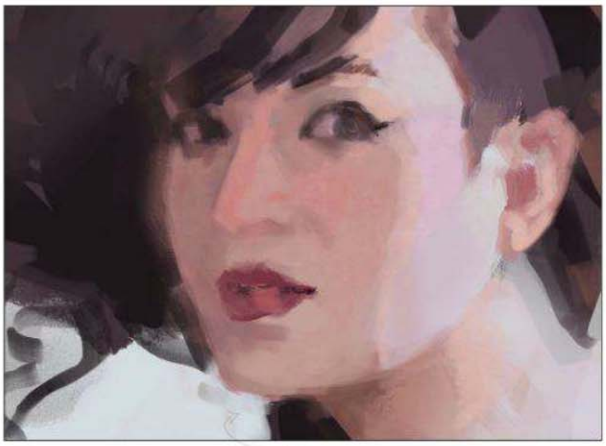
PRO SECRETS

The science of eyes

Try this – look at your hand in front of your face. Without refocusing your eyes try to notice details about your arm. It's actually quite blurry! Our eyes can only focus completely on a small area of vision close by. By choosing a focal point for your portrait and gradually losing detail away from it, you help the illusion that the subject is right there in front of the viewer. If you are painting from life, focus on your focal point and use peripheral vision to see the rest of the scene. Working from a photograph, everything is in focus, so you have to invent this effect.

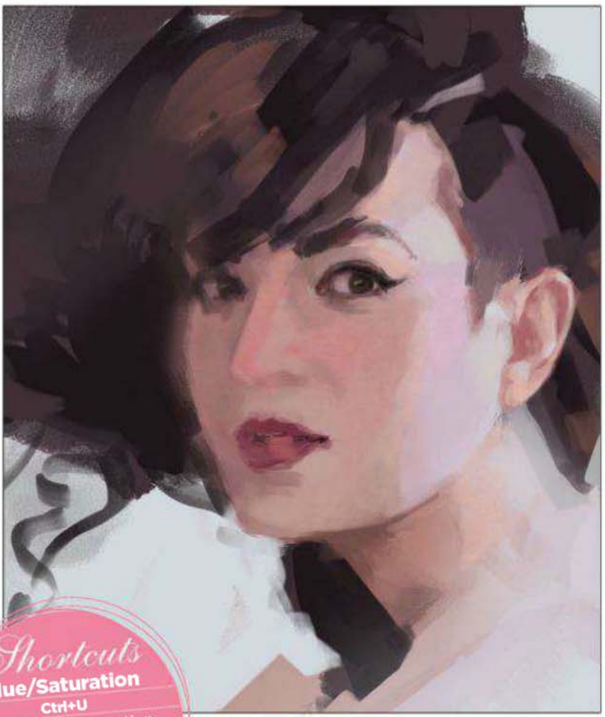


“The proportions, likeness, light and form are all set up here in the first simple strokes”



5 Facial features

After I am satisfied that the basic shapes are in place, I begin to work on smaller areas of the painting. The temptation is to use hard lines to define the edges of each feature, but most of the edges should be soft to show that the volumes turn gradually in space. As I add the features, I am careful not to be too dark or defined too quickly. I zoom out often so I can see the relationship between the features.



6 Focal point

When deciding a composition there should be one focal point designed to attract the viewer's attention. For portraits, it's often a single eye. Satisfied with the basic placement of my features, I add more refinement in my focal point – the right eye. By starting my rendering with the focal point, I can always compare against it and be sure that the rest of the painting is not competing for attention.

Shortcuts

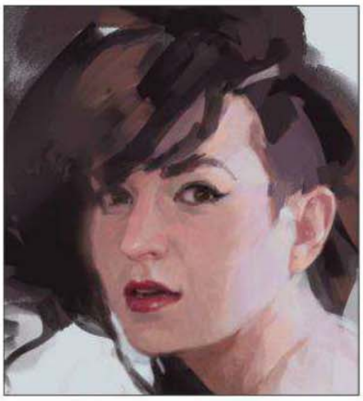
Hue/Saturation

Ctrl+U

Adjust overall saturation, or for just one colour range. Use the hue slider to experiment with colours.

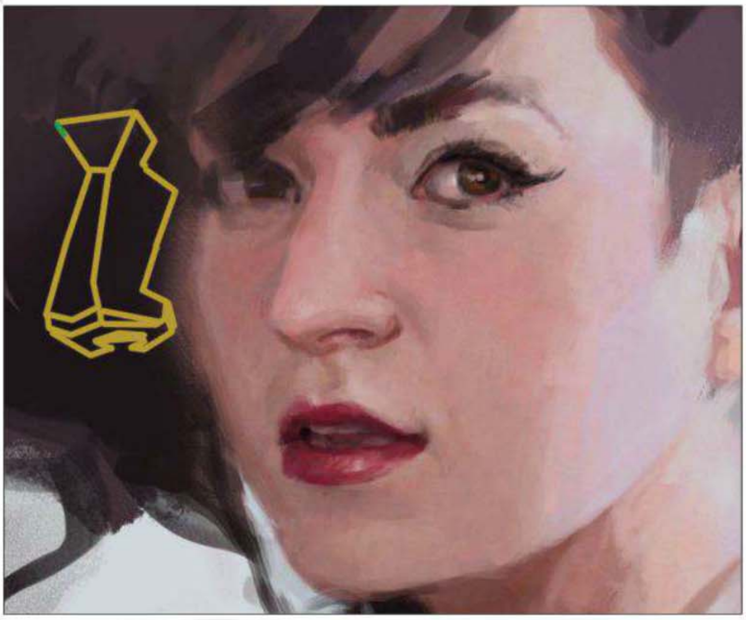
7 Work outwards from the focal point

Now that I've added details to the focal point of the painting, I can start refining the rest of the portrait. I begin to work outwards from the eye. As I work further away from this point, I use softer edges and less contrast. I have planned that the large area of her back will be mostly lost into bright light, so I don't need to add any details there. As I move around the canvas adding refinement, I do it on several new layers so, if I need to, I can always get back to the basic structure I was satisfied with.



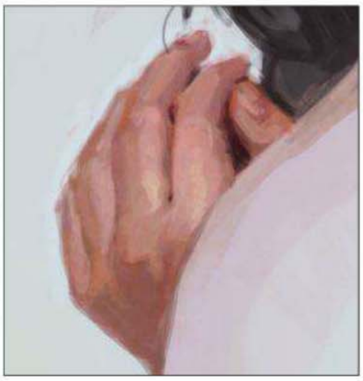
8 Defining planes

While rendering details, I imagine each area as a simple construction of planes – like it's chiselled out of wood. Volume or depth is light falling on three-dimensional form. Where the form turns to face away from the light source, it becomes shaded. Keeping the structure in mind helps me to understand how the shading works, rather than just copying its placement.



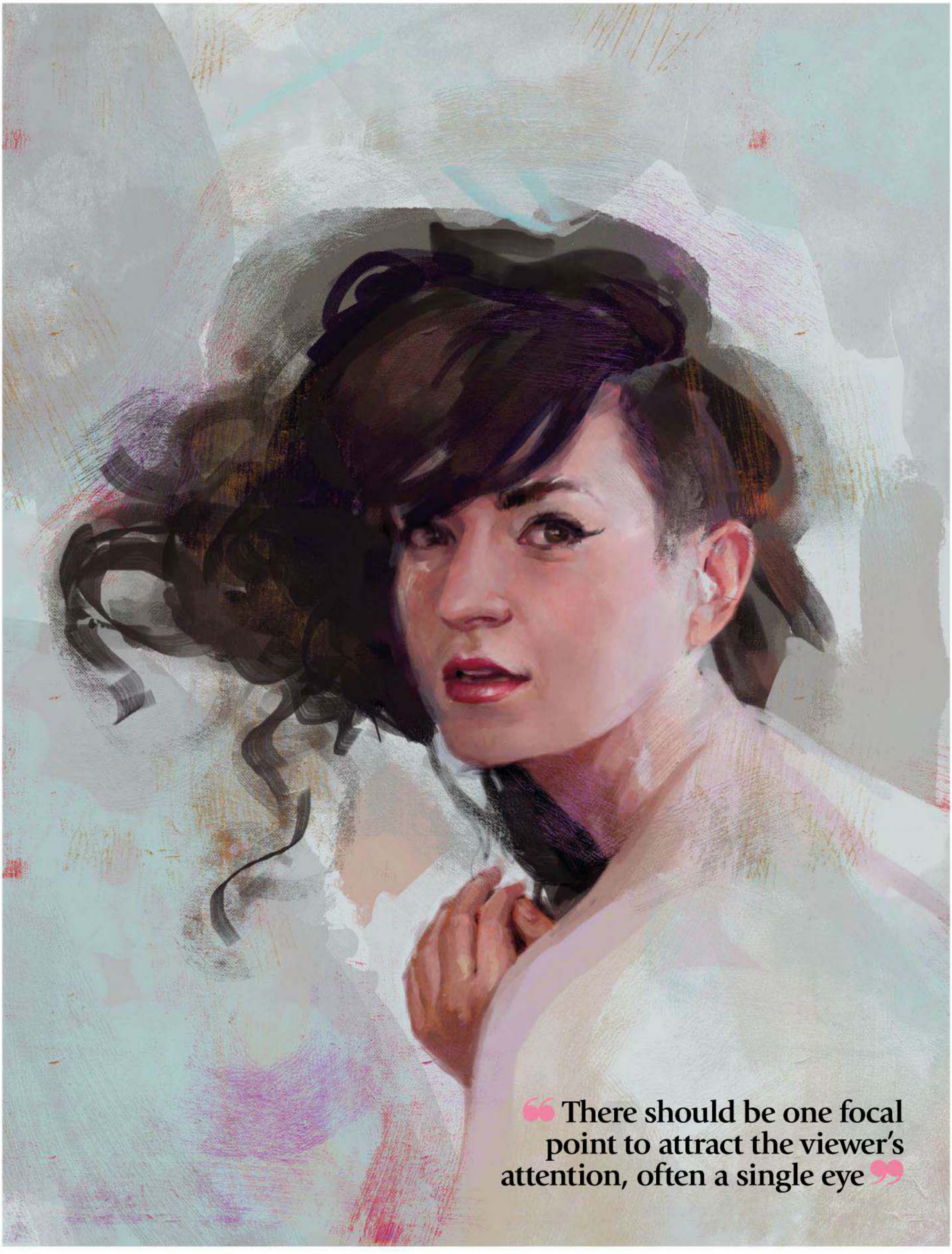
9 Painting in the hand detail

Hands are almost as personal as faces, and the gesture of this one really adds to the candid feeling of the piece. I don't want to emphasize it too much, however. The hand is a supporting element in the painting. I paint from joint to joint, looking for the bends in the fingers and separating them with values, again following the plane changes. The outside edges can be left a little fuzzy so that the hand doesn't stand out or feel stuck on to the background.

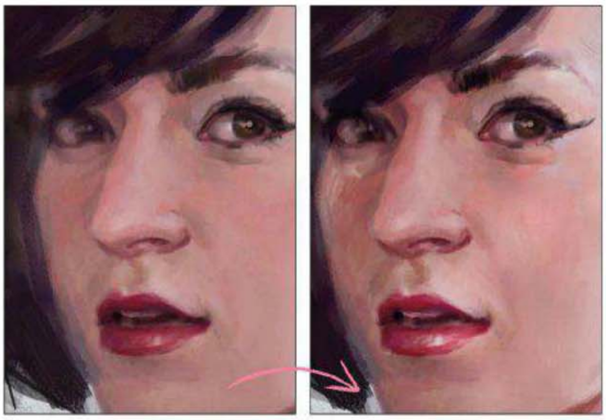


10 Background

The background needs activity, and some touches of colour to bring it together with the figure. For this, I use high-res paint texture brushes to quickly fill in the space with abstract details. I select colours from the painting and layer them under the texture, keeping in mind that the overall tone should be cool and the value a bit darker than the brightest light on her skin so she will pop out.



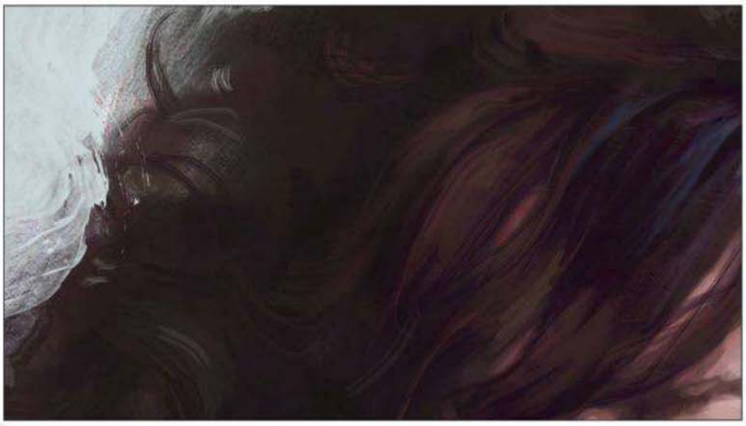
“There should be one focal point to attract the viewer’s attention, often a single eye”



11 Tweak layers

Even with all the colour and texture in the background, I feel it is a bit sterile. I take a snapshot (see Snapshots) and start experimenting – hiding it under painting layers, and trying out various blending modes. Changing earlier layers can lead to interesting, unexpected effects, with the details painted later still intact. I adjust levels on a few of the layers to give more contrast to the skin tones.

> “Changing earlier layers can lead to interesting, unexpected effects, with the details painted later still intact”

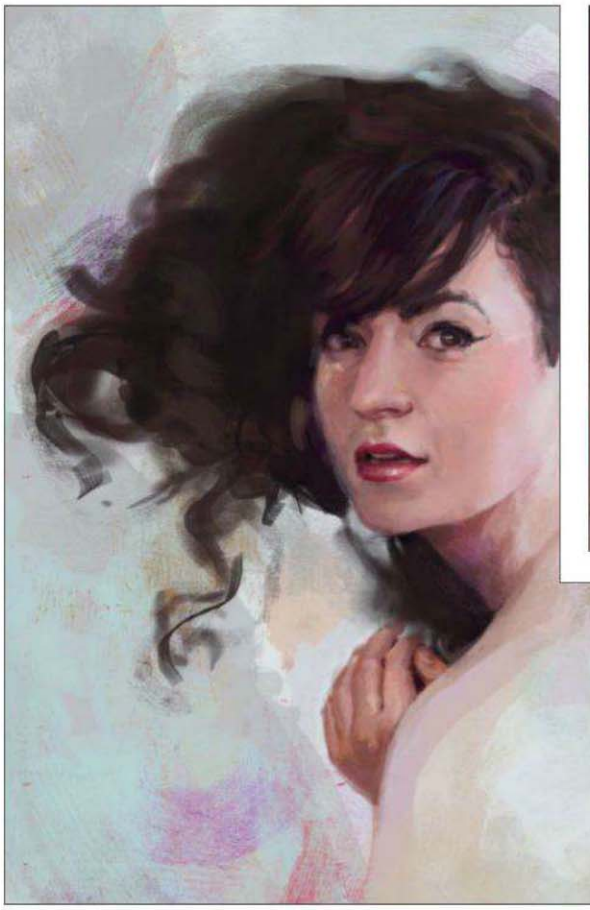


13 Strands

Once the main shape of the hair is in, I add texture and lighting. The texture of this dark hair mostly shows up in the highlight areas, so I focus on those. It's impossible to paint every strand of hair, so I squint again to see the big changes in value and colour and paint those in first. A few very fine strokes added last give the sense of strands.

12 Soft shapes for hair

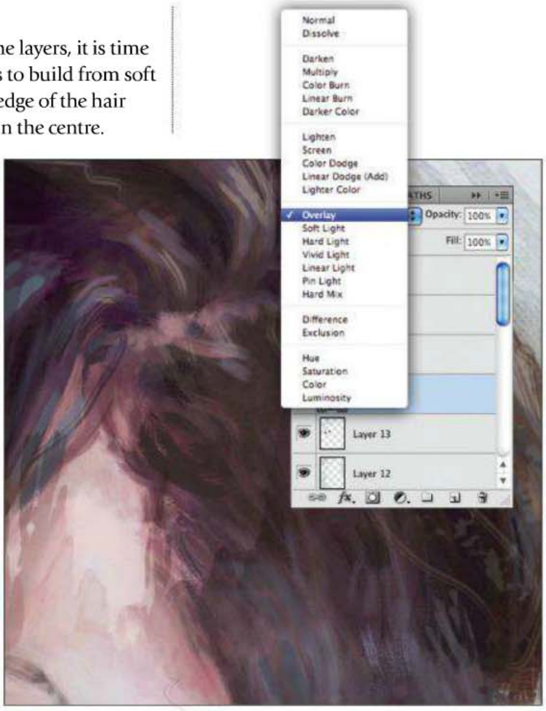
Satisfied with the happy accidents from experimenting with the layers, it is time to work on the hair. For a big mess of textured hair like this, the key is to build from soft edges. I use a soft round airbrush, especially focusing on the outside edge of the hair shape where I want to show that the strands become less dense than in the centre.



PRO SECRETS

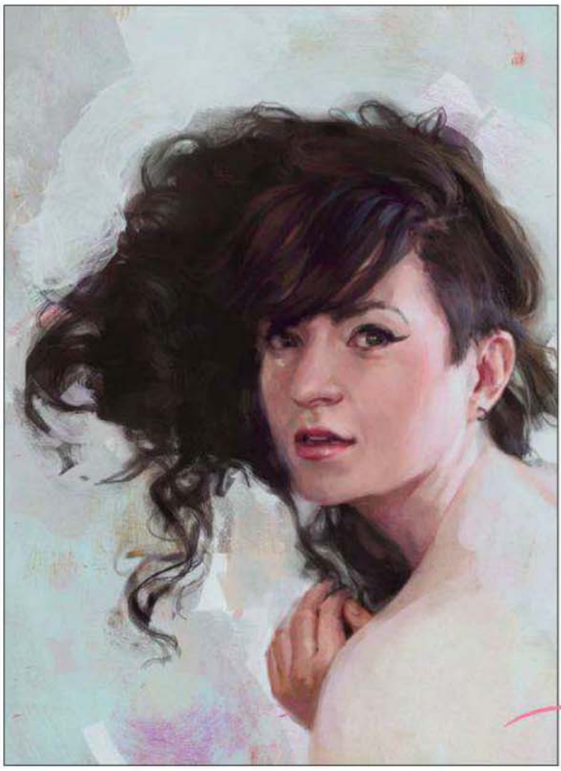
Snapshots

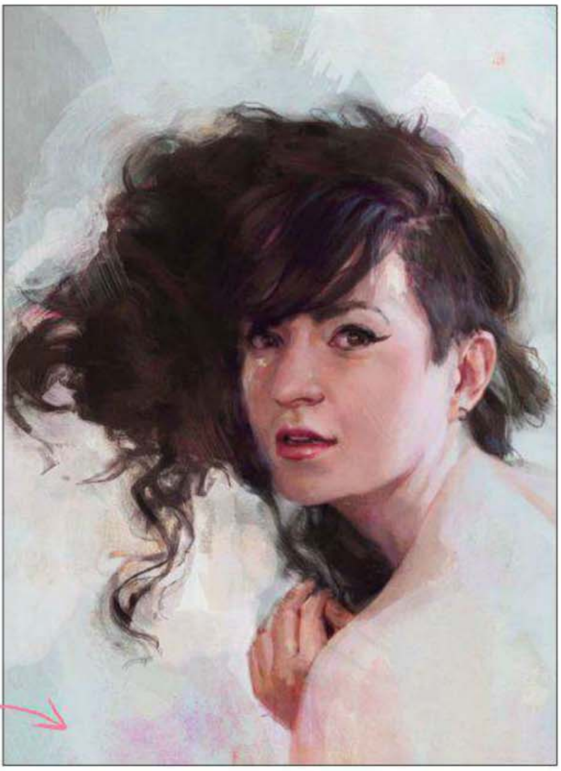
A snapshot saves an image of your painting. You can use it in combination with the History brush tool to paint back to a previous snapshot 'save'. Take a snapshot by clicking the camera icon on the bottom of the history menu. You'll see it on top of the history, above recent actions. Click the square to the left of the snapshot to set it as your History brush layer, then paint with the History brush on your image to see the previous image revealed. This is useful if you've accidentally obscured a part of your painting, or you just liked how it looked earlier on.


Normal
Dissolve
Darken
Multiply
Color Burn
Linear Burn
Darker Color
Lighten
Screen
Color Dodge
Linear Dodge (Add)
Lighter Color
Overlay
Soft Light
Hard Light
Vivid Light
Linear Light
Pin Light
Hard Mix
Difference
Exclusion
Hue
Saturation
Color
Luminosity
Opacity: 100%
Fill: 100%
Layer 13
Layer 12

14 Layer options

One of my favourite digital tricks is to use a texture in combination with a low opacity or one of the layer blend modes, so that the image shows through. It adds a sense of detail without actually painting in details. For this, I use paint texture brushes again. I am not too careful with where they fall – letting some of the background spill over the figure makes her feel integrated in the space. This layer gets set to Overlay, a layer mode that makes darks darker and lights lighter.





WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: CANVAS BRUSH

This came from a set created by artist Jama Jurabaev. The texture is very organic, like a dry brush stroke across a canvas. I used it lightly for finishing touch colour and texture notes.

CUSTOM BRUSH: WATERCOLOR TEXTURE

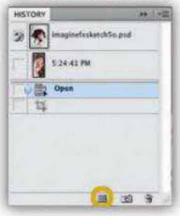
From a fantastic brush set by Jay Hilgert. These brushes are huge, meaning they look good even on print-size files. I layered these brushes to create the non-digital look of the background.

15 Playing around

If it were a pastel painting I would stop now. Instead I save and decide to keep tweaking levels and Hue/Saturation for the various layers, and messing with the shapes in the background. This is an advantage of digital: I can always go back, so there is no reason not to experiment. Now I close the reference so I can focus on the painting and stop thinking about capturing the photo.

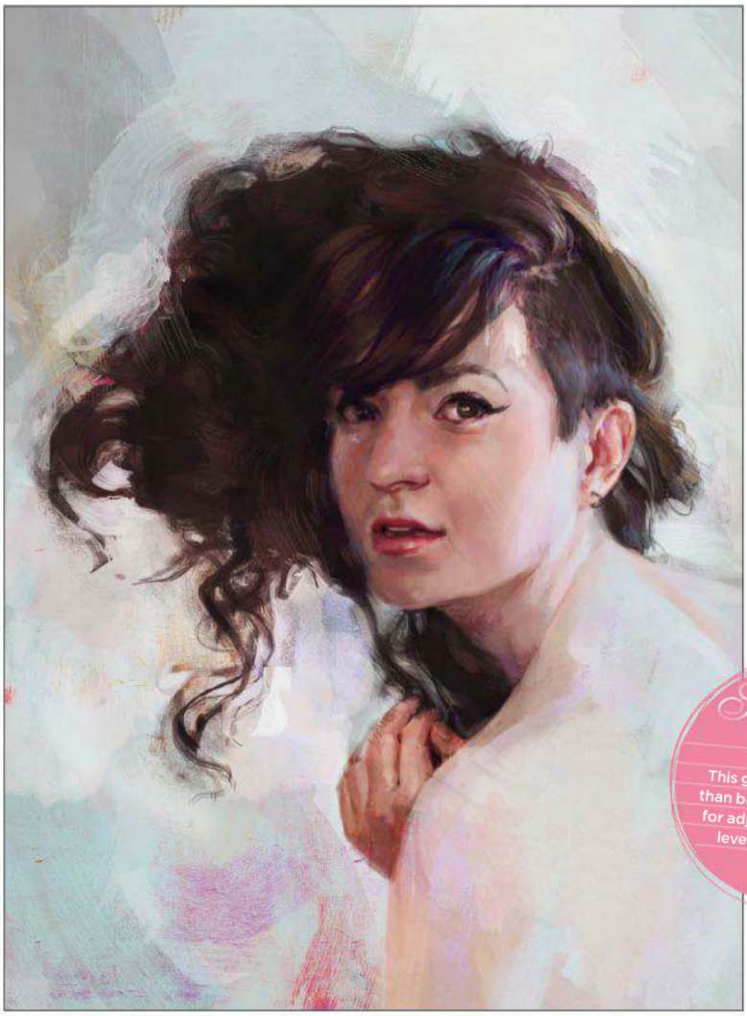
16 New file

Now that I've done everything I can tweak the layered image. I use the duplicate file button in the history menu to make a copy, and merge down all of the layers in that copy. I am always careful not to merge the layers on the original. Duplicating first allows you to go back and make changes in the layered image if needed.



17 Final touches

On the newly merged file, I darken and lighten the values a bit further in selected areas using Dodge and Burn. These tools can get really garish, so I set them to a low exposure and only do one pass. The background is missing some flow. I want it to help lead your eye around the piece. For the final pass I use the texture brushes again to tweak those shapes so they wrap around the model. With that, I call it done!



Shortcuts

Levels

Ctrl+L

This gives more control than brightness/contrast for adjusting values and levels for individual colours.

Gallery

Get inspired by today's painters who mix traditional and digital techniques to create beautiful artwork

Erik Jones

With a passion for pin-up art and the gallery art scene, Erik moved from Florida to New York and has been creating stylistic, evocative fine art ever since.

"I put everything into my paintings," says Erik, "The way I paint skin is, I apply a watercolour base then cover the entire canvas in white pencil. This creates a waxy texture on the surface to blend the pencil better." Then he gets to work with his oils, acrylics and Copic Markers.

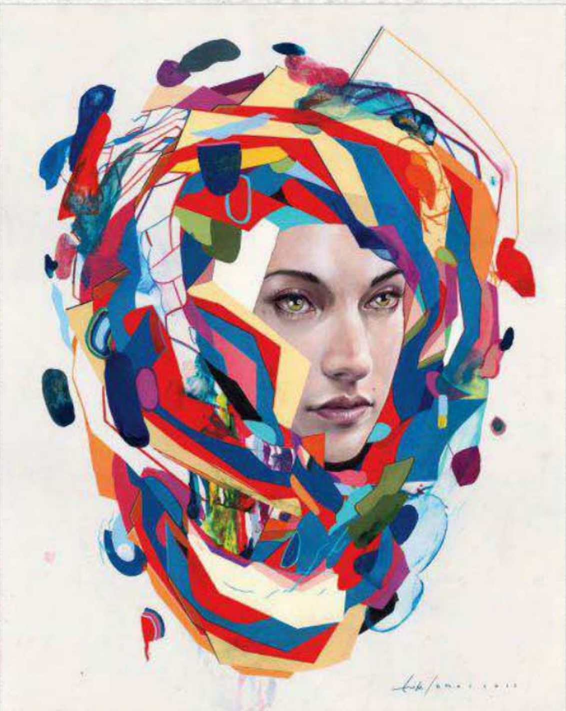
> **"I didn't like the composition so I chopped it in half. I awoke to find a piece of art that seemed to sing to me"**

A massive fan of pin up artists like Gil Elygren and J. Scott Campbell, it's actually the Art Nouveau genius artist Alphonse Mucha that Erik most admires. "Mucha blows my mind," he says. "I struggle with showing nudity and trying to not to give the piece too much of a sexual vibe." You've got to come down on the right side of sexy. "Mucha was the king at showing nudity while maintaining class".

With his unique technique and eye for presenting female beauty in a striking way, Erik was destined for comic covers. He created the cover of the Jennifer's Body comic and The Unknown series.

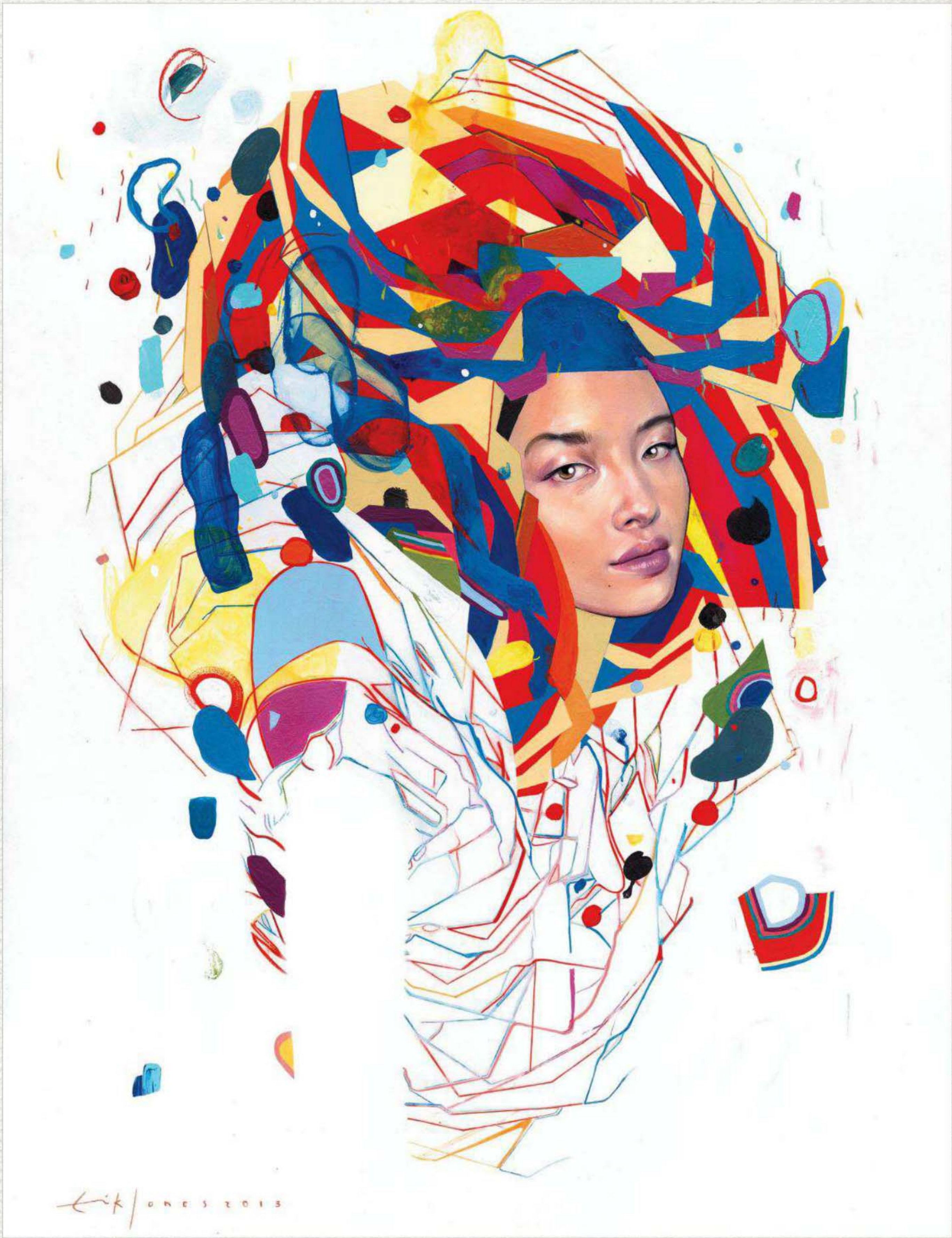
The artist is also making the most of New York's renowned gallery art scene, and is usually found near or in one, whether that's helping out on the Scope NY Art Show, or running and featuring art work in his The Tata Gala – an exhibition about breasts, for breast cancer charities.

With recent commissions for musician Kendra Morris and band Woodbine Falls, Erik's singular art is gaining a wider appeal. **www.theirison.com**



ARTIST'S ADVICE

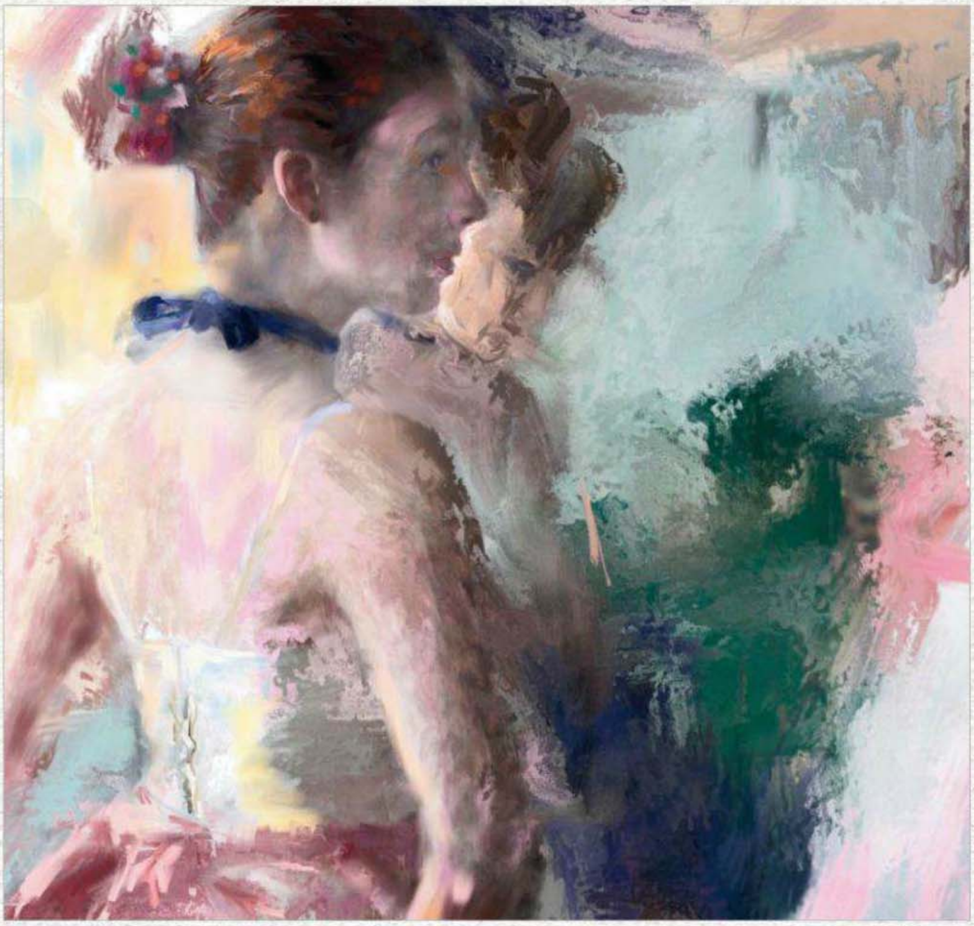
"Don't be limited to one media! I use everything in my paintings. For my last piece I used watercolour, coloured pencil for skin, Copic Marker and acrylic for hair, as well as water-based oil for the background… it's fun!"



Jeremy Sutton

With being something of a digital impressionist, art becomes a balancing act of realistic representation and stylistic interpretation. "For me, a unique, expressive and personal interpretation is what brings a painting to life," Jeremy explains. With a core focus on capturing the essence of passion and feeling, Jeremy prefers to start out his painting process with abstract forms that focus on energy, movement and overall composition. "I call this The Abstraction Stage, working with light and dark blocks while analysing how colour affects the light and dark elements of the composition."

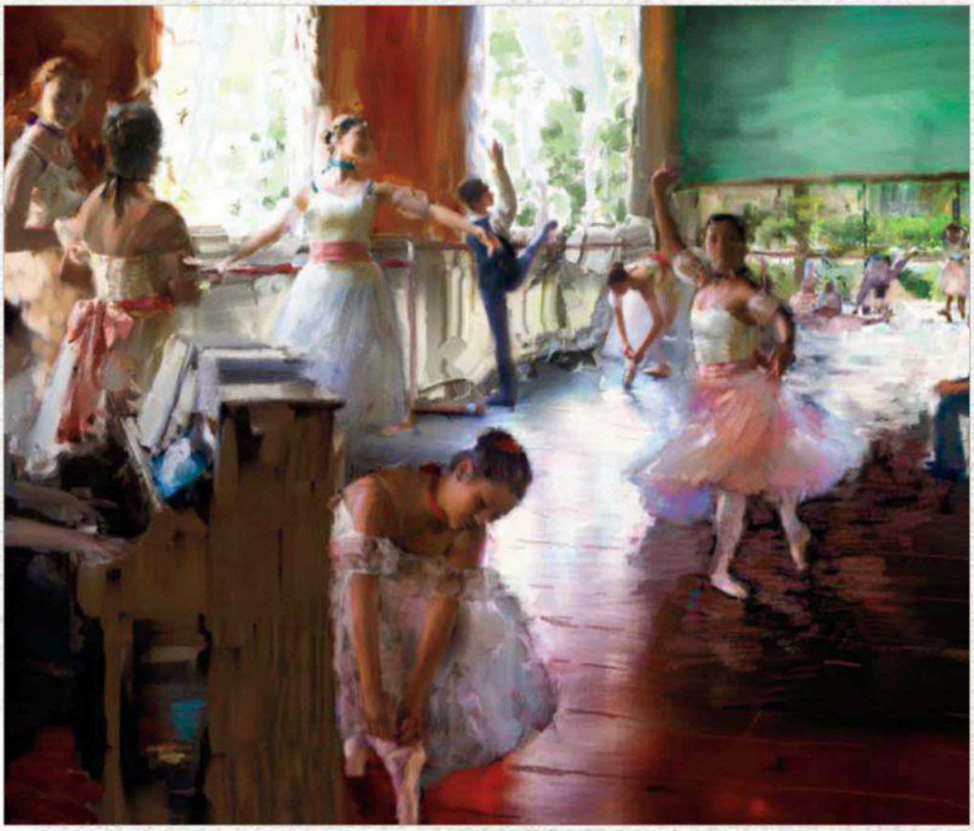
It all comes down to the freedom to play. "My work always uses expressive colours that convey emotion, and my main interests – music and dance – often filter into my art."



> **" One of the best things about painting is the freedom to play, to experiment and to take risks "**

With having a fondness for rich and organic brush textures, the scope for digital brush customisation is just as appealing as the amount to choose from. "It's important to remember that you don't have to use them all!" he laughs. "I sometimes paint over digital art with real paints to create mixed-media pieces – usually acrylics on a canvas print of one of my digital works."

www.jeremysutton.com



ARTIST'S ADVICE

"It's important to look beyond the illusion of what's being represented. You must ask yourself questions as you paint, such as what can you play with?"

Licia Euclase

As a self-taught artist, Licia's childhood love for drawing eventually led to experimentation with digital painting, which proved to be both a creative and social venture. "I love the accessibility and freedom digital art allows. It's a very malleable, tidy medium that's perfect for sharing online," Licia says. "It's also very pretty."

It all began when Licia was given a tablet as a gift. "I gave it a try and immediately loved it. My software of choice is Photoshop, which I like because it allows me to be as simple or complex with my art as I want. There's a great deal you can do with it, or you can simply pick a brush and go if you prefer."

When you look at Licia's incredible photo-realistic images, the only thing that's missing is the character breathing before your very eyes. "I use references for various elements, but draw separate images on multiple layers. I often start first with a sketch and then lay down basic colors before gradually refining the details."

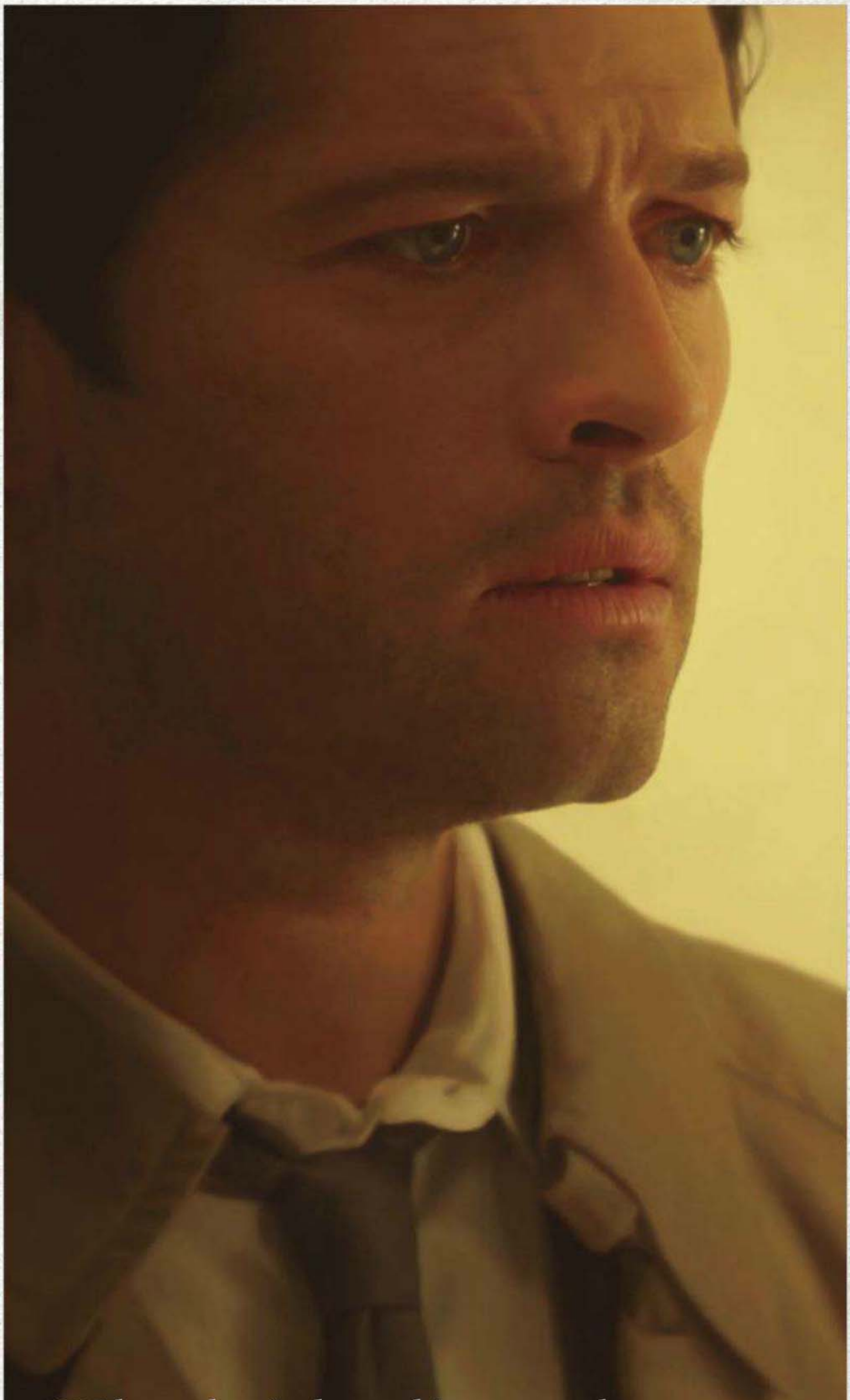
Although startlingly realistic, there's often something of a surreal edge to Licia's work, with many portraits making striking use of unconventional compositions and dramatic stillness, with expressions often becoming the main focus. "With ethereal characters, I love to bring out still and silent elements so that the magical features can be the most dramatic."

The humble artist feels that as long as she continues to draw and enjoy art with others she will be happy, simply wishing to "improve, try new things and share art." That's certainly a very worthy code to live by in our books.

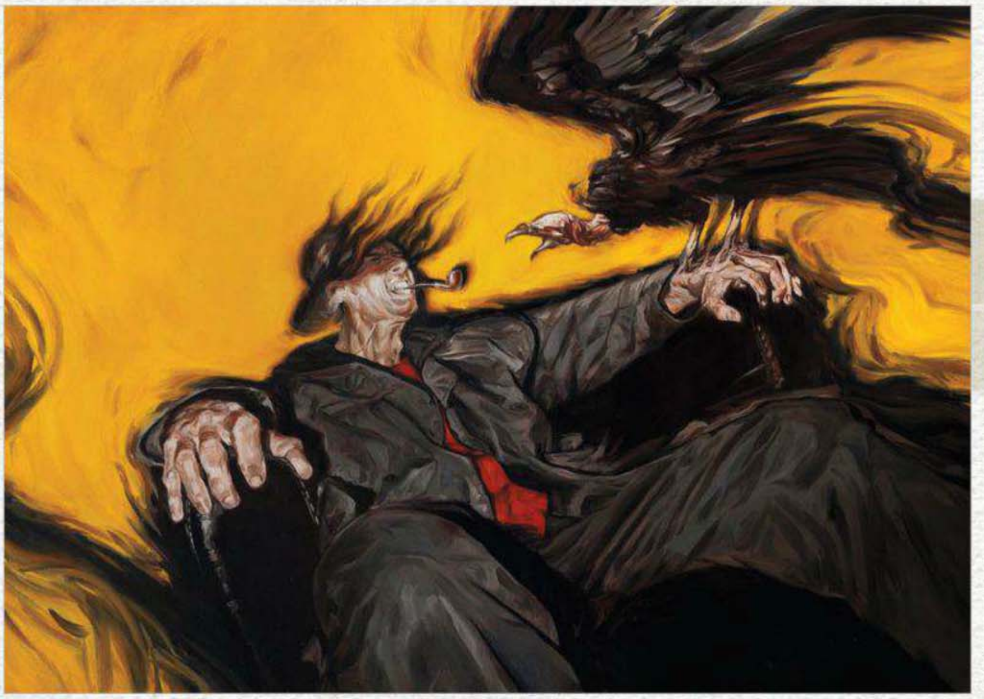
www.euclase.deviantart.com

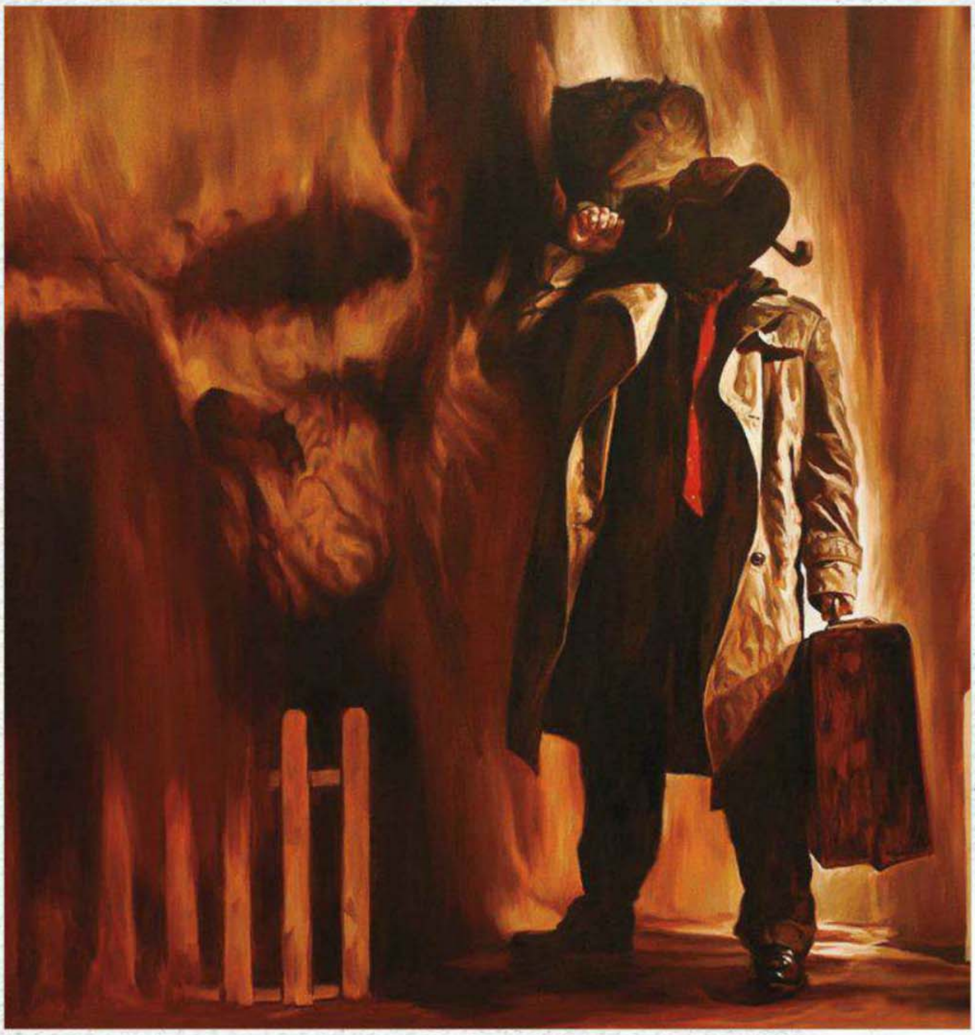
ARTIST'S ADVICE

"I prefer to use plain backgrounds and subtle colour palettes when doing highly realistic work, because they both seem to add a sense of intimacy and stillness."



> "I love classical angel iconography and often experiment with a realistic and somewhat Baroque aesthetic"





Shane Pierce

Having spent his working life in the video games industry creating stunning concept art for Epic Games, Shane likes to indulge his artistic side with a personal project in oils.

Shane's first love is to work in oil paints. These large-scale portraits, called the Nomad series, feature the same set of noir-inspired figures dramatically lit in nondescript places. Shane's use of light and shade, movement and gesture create startling figurative paintings.

"Oil painting is my real obsession, it's my passion, it's very important to me," says the artist. "I just love the feel of bristle brushes on the surface of canvas and controlling not just the shape, value and edges, but also the depth of the paint."

> **" draw really cool art that's soaked in atmosphere, with painterly detail "**

Though his love of oils dominates, Shane has begun to use his iPad to sketch ideas and paint with. "What I like is that it's all in one setup," explains the artist. "The iPad is self-illuminated, it's already a hard surface to draw on and the drawings can be as complex or as simple as you want them to be."

www.shanepierce.com

ARTIST'S ADVICE

"A great piece, to me, is one where the design is really thought out. People can paint realistically or they can draw a cartoon, but the design of thing is what counts."

Sam Spratt

People get into art for all kinds of reasons. For Sam, it was to impress a girl. "I only went to art school because of a relationship with a girl at the time," he recalls, "so when I got there at age 18, I figured that it would be helpful be able to draw like everyone else at a school."

Sam soon became addicted to getting better at creating. "Art's enduring appeal for me is less about expression and more so a lifelong curiosity and desire to understand how to create things."

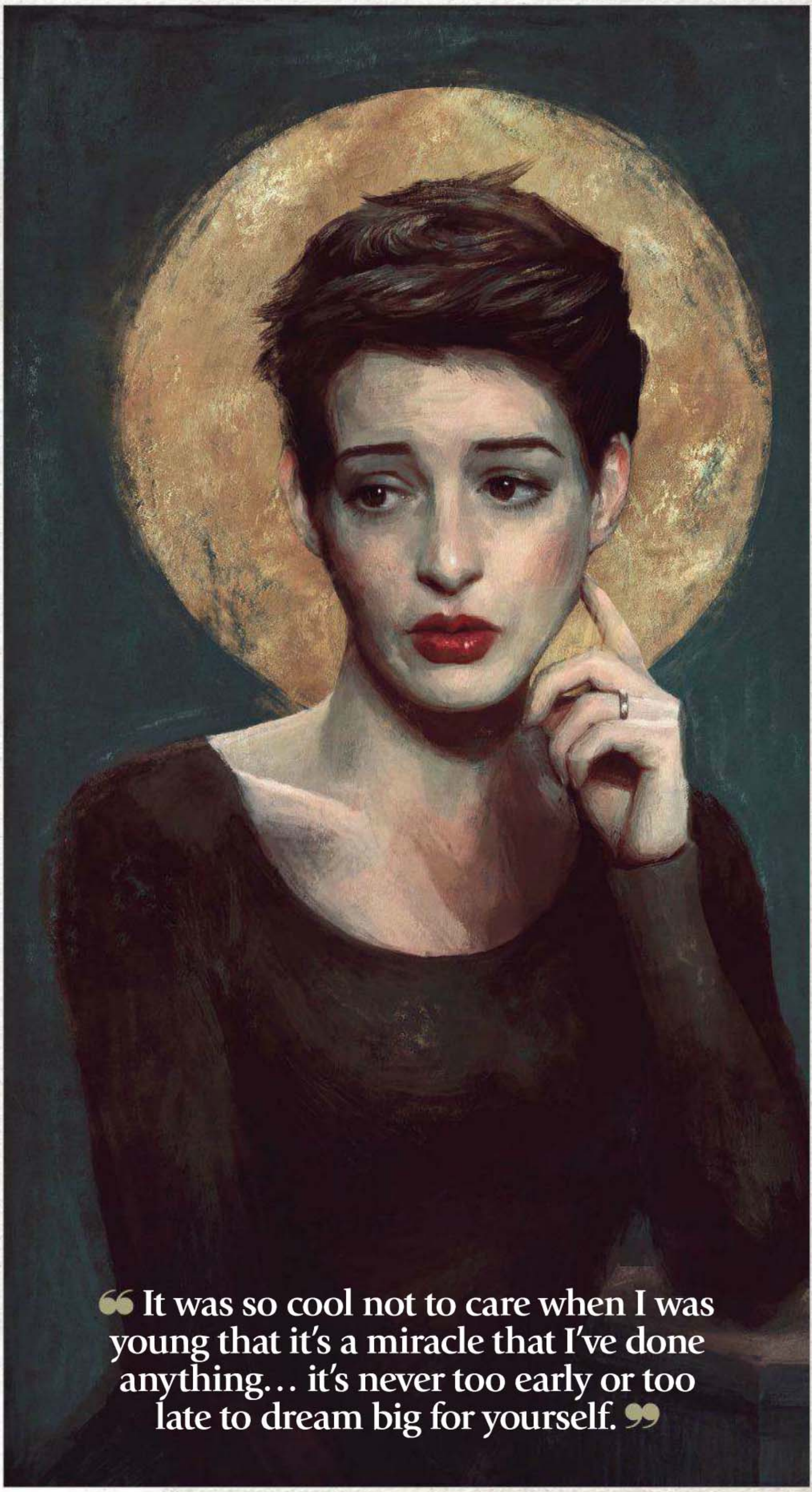
So far Sam has been the first staffed illustrator at Gawker and Gizmodo, in late 2010, after which he struck out as a freelancer. Most recently Square Enix commissioned him to illustrate a poster for the new Tomb Raider game.

Sam's personal art gives him even more room to experiment. "My personal work covers different subjects, styles, themes, and moods," he says. "At any given moment I have dozens of painting ideas I'd love to execute, and for me it's less about picking subjects, more about finding a way to create what's on my mind at that moment."

This is mirrored in his technique. "Sometimes things get nailed down in the sketch stage, but more often it's evolving and shifting as the painting develops."

This "problem solving" approach applies to all Sam's work, and it's not the only common thread. "Whilst work paintings can differ so much from client to client, an evenly divided pie chart of likeness, character, and style should probably apply to most of them," he says.

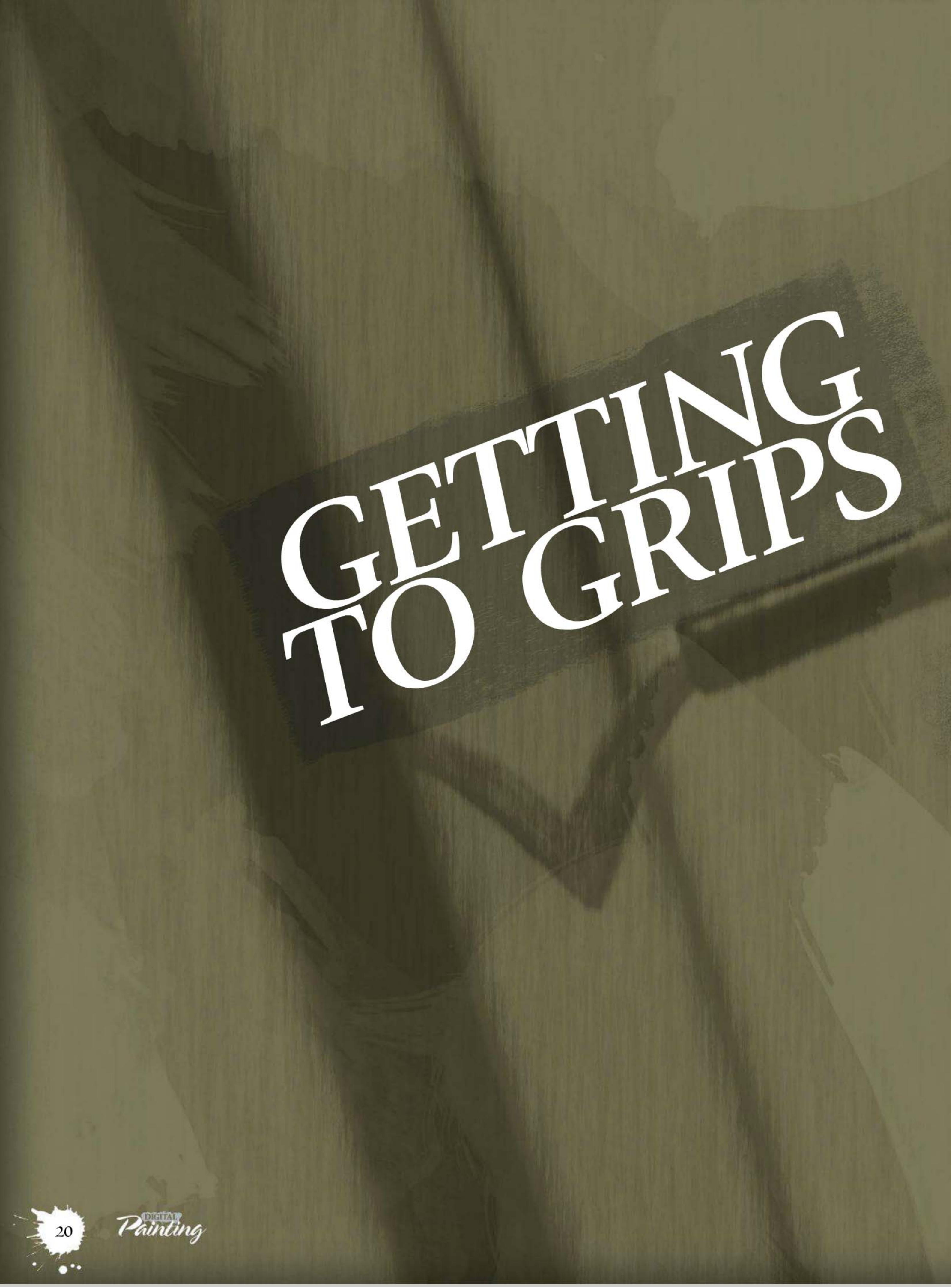
www.samspratt.com



> “It was so cool not to care when I was young that it's a miracle that I've done anything… it's never too early or too late to dream big for yourself.”

ARTIST'S ADVICE

"Digital gives you an exhaustive amount of control, to the point that until you learn the intricacies of digital brush control, the process can feel synthetic to some."



GETTING TO GRIPS

WITH TABLETS

If you're new to painting on tablets or just looking to upgrade your set-up, here's where to start…

Where once you just needed to know that the iPad was the place to paint digitally on the go, now there are numerous tablets and slates released each month, and even more apps and stylus to tempt you.

In the coming pages we'll look at the best of the new tablets on the market, whether iOS powered Apple iPads, the latest Android device or the new Windows 8 hardware that's setting new benchmarks. We'll also look at the latest and best stylus to make painting on tablets that bit easier, and give you a round-up of the best painting apps for your device.

So, whether you're a beginner or a pro looking to upgrade, we're sure there's something new here to add to your set-up. Then, once set, read through our workshops that explore the apps featured here and set yourself on a new journey in digital art. ➛

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO…

CHOOSING YOUR TABLET

For digital artists who want to paint on the go, here's our pick of the best new tablets on the market…

iPad

Price £399 **Company** Apple **Web** www.apple.com/uk

Now into its fourth generation, the iPad is still regarded as the leading tablet on the market. While ostensibly similar to the previous iPad (it's only marginally thicker and a little heavier), the latest edition of iPad has one defining new feature that makes it a key investment for digital artists on the go: the Retina Display.

Apple's latest tablet features a true HD screen that still stands as one of the sharpest tablet screens on the market. Apple has packed a huge number of pixels into the 9.7-inch screen – 1536x2048 to be exact. It's superb, and even squinting up close you'll be hard pushed to notice any pixelation. The colour reproduction will also appeal to many, as it's pretty close to reality. It lacks the punch of the Super AMOLED HD screens seen on the likes of the Samsung Galaxy Note for instance, but it will depend on personal preference as to whether that's a good thing. Some like the vivid colours of Samsung's screens, but plenty of people loathe them too.

There are other new additions to add some power and flexibility to the tablet, notably an updated A5X processor bringing quad-core graphics and a 5MP camera on the rear with a VGA sensor on the front.

There's still no touch-sensitive screen and Apple continue to insist on fingers and thumbs ahead of stylus as the preferred input method. But with some very good stylus on the market to overcome both issues, the iPad still stands as a great do-all tablet, perfect for digital art and more.

Samsung Note 10.1

Price £375 **Company** Samsung **Web** www.samsung.com

With its pressure sensitive stylus, the Samsung Note 10.1 has a lot to offer. See Kan Muftic use it to create this urban scene on page 56

After a shaky start, the Android tablet has matured, thanks in no small part to premium devices such as Samsung's Galaxy Note 10.1.

The Galaxy Note 10.1 feels squarely targeted at digital artists. It comes with a nifty stylus, dubbed the S Pen, which neatly tucks into the main body of the device. The full version of Adobe Photoshop Touch is pre-installed, as well as Samsung's bespoke S Note software, which makes basic image creation and editing possible. The touchscreen is hugely accurate, both to prods from the finger and when using the stylus.

It's the stylus that gives the Galaxy Note 10.1 a massive advantage over the iPad – especially for artists – because it is pressure sensitive. The screen is able to recognise a whopping 1,024 levels of pressure, so firmer strokes with the stylus result in thicker lines.

The Galaxy Note 10.1 features a similar white-and-silver colour scheme, but it feels far more like a landscape device than Apple's oversized phone. However, the silver bits are plastic rather than Apple's beloved brushed-aluminium, which makes the device seem a little cheap and flimsy.

Although its interface and design is polished it can't match Apple's famous sleekness and ease-of-use. But that pressure sensitivity counts for a lot. It's fabulously fully featured, and more painting apps are appearing each month.

With a pixel density even higher than the iPad's, the Nexus 10 display is impressively crisp

Nexus 10

Price £319 (16GB), £389 (32GB) **Company** Google **Web** www.google.com/nexus/10

At 10 inches the Nexus 10 is in line with Apple's iPad. Google has crammed it with impressive features too, while keeping the price below an iPad.

Its 2560x1600 resolution is slightly higher than the fourth-generation iPad, and almost double a standard HD television set. The result is an impressively crisp display that's perfect for viewing high-quality art.

Powering this mini behemoth of a display is a dual-core processor and a dedicated graphics chip, which result in a smooth user experience. It runs the latest Android operating system.

There's none of the touchscreen sensitivity that makes the Android-powered Samsung Galaxy Note such a tempting prospect for digital artists, and Adonit's Jot Touch pressure-sensitive stylus still doesn't work properly with Android.

While the screen is hugely impressive, some art software can't quite get its head around the sheer number of pixels. When we put fingertip to screen in SketchBook Pro, for example, it takes a while for the tablet to keep up, especially when creating complex shapes. Adobe's Photoshop Touch runs far more smoothly.

It seems that Android still hasn't entered artists' collective consciousness in the way that Apple has, and while Adobe and Autodesk have both developed software for the platform, like the Samsung Note, it lacks many of the painting apps you'd find on Apple's tablet.

Acer Iconia W700

Price £590/£740 **Company** Acer **Web** www.acer.co.uk

The Iconia W700 is a Windows 8 hybrid tablet – halfway between the power of a laptop and the portability of a tablet. It differs from other hybrids by not having a keyboard that attaches to the body of the tablet. Instead it looks like a normal tablet, albeit bulkier. It docks into a stand that props it up at a usable angle and acts as a charging stand and USB hub.

It's a fairly hefty piece of kit but the Iconia W700 offers plenty of power

The mix of power and portability means the Iconia doesn't look as stylish as an iPad or Samsung. There's a laptop grade processor working behind that screen and the heat needs to be dissipated. And it packs a good punch – coming in two builds, the 64GB, Core i3 version or the 128GB, Core i5 version, the Iconia can run full Windows 8 and full versions of leading software such as Photoshop or Sketchbook Pro.

The Acer Iconia W700 measures 11.9x295x191mm (0.5x11.6x7.5 inches) and weighs 925g (33oz), making it one slab of slate with a great HD screen. Wrapped in aluminium, it is easily one of the best-built tablets on the market.

The Iconia isn't cheap and becomes less of an addition to your digital art set-up and more a replacement for it.

ARTIST INTERVIEW

COR LEONIS

This painter and writer wants artists to use Android tablets

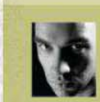
What's the best thing about Android for digital artists?
I think Android offers more freedom. Tablets with pen pressure sensitivity such as the Galaxy Note 10.1 are starting to appear on the market, which is probably the most important feature to consider for digital artists.

What would you like to see improved next?
The next step is to improve this technology and make it even more realistic, like the Wacom Cintiq tablets which offer up to 2,048 levels of pressure sensitivity and 40 degrees of tilt control. More art software would be welcome, too.

How do you think Android devices compare to similar Apple ones?
I find Android devices to be usually just as good, if not better, for a lower or comparable price, and Apple has no tablet that incorporates pressure sensitivity. Almost every iOS app has an Android counterpart and if not, they are (or should be) getting one. CGHub just released its app in December and it's awesome.

What made you choose Android over Apple?
Simply put, the openness and customisation possibilities of the operating system. If you're very visual, like me, you'll enjoy making your homescreen one-of-a-kind with various widgets. With minimum knowledge you can also root your tablet and install custom ROMs which are even faster and more efficient than the original OS.

What do you primarily use the tablet for, other than art?
It's great for all kinds of stuff, from syncing emails to gaming. I mostly use it to read digital comics and get news alerts, but there are tons of great apps out there.



A former officer in the Canadian army, Cor is now a concept artist, illustrator, comic artist and author.

www.corleonisworld.com

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO…

CHOOSING A STYLUS

With so many stylus to choose from, we guide you through the important features to think about when picking one that suits you

Wacom's Bamboo Stylus is built to feel like a pencil and is weight-balanced to give you consistent contact with your tablet

PEN PRECISION

Like the Jot Touch, the tip of Adonit's Jot Flip features a plastic disc with a metal centre which enables precise drawing

If you've just got an iPad or tablet and want to take your digital sketches to the next level, you need a stylus. But what should you look for in your new handy sketching tool? Here's some tips…

SIZE

Stylus now come in many shapes and sizes, from slimline pencil shapes to chunky markers, and in the case of Wacom's Bamboo Stylus Pocket, an adjustable shaft to enable you to set the length of the stylus to your liking. Choose one that fits your style and purpose. The Pengo Brush Pen and Adonit Jot Touch are great for those who like their fingers to sit around the nib, and the Targus Stylus is better suited to those who like to hold the pen further up. And then there's the Nomad Brush that replicates the feel of using a traditional paint brush.

WEIGHT

Most stylus are made from plastic and aluminium which makes them incredibly light, perfect for slipping into a pocket. However, it's best to choose a stylus with some artificial weight. Here, the Wacom Bamboo Stylus stands out as it has a weight near the nib to give a more authentic grip and feel to your sketching.

BUILD QUALITY

There are a lot of stylus hitting the market at the moment, some are cheap and liable to break easily. Choose a stylus with solid build quality and a sturdy nib. Where possible, try before you buy and don't shirk on your spending – aim for a quality stylus that will last!

ACCURACY

The general rule of thumb states the smaller the nib, nubbin or tip, the more accurate it will be. This is more important to iPad users than Android tablets, as the lack of pressure sensitivity on Apple's device means

TESTING THE BEST

There are many stylus to choose from for both iPad and Android devices, and all have unique advantages. Here's our pick of the best…

NOMAD BRUSH

Price $24 **Company** NomadBrush
Web www.nomadbrush.com

Using a finger for touchscreen painting is fine for dabbling, but many artists soon crave the reassurance of a pen or brush. The first stylus for tablet devices were functional if uninspiring, but now we're seeing a new generation of drawing tools with an emphasis on drawing comfort.

The Nomad Brush looks like a standard brush, but its fibre blend conducts the tiny amount of electricity in your hand that tablet devices need to register your touch. In other words, you can use it to paint on your touchscreen. It works with the iPad, Android tablets or any device that uses a capacitive touchscreen. It's not a substitute for your graphic tablet stylus, however.

Light but well-constructed, the Nomad Brush is a delight to use. You don't need to press hard: it really is like using a brush on canvas. Bear in mind, though, that it's conceptually no different from a stylus tip despite its sophistication: it's the painting app you use that dictates the style and size of the marks you make.

WACOM BAMBOO STYLUS

Price £30 **Company** Wacom
Web wacom.eu

There are a fair few iPhone and iPad stylus now, so a newcomer is going to have to be extra special to compete. But as you'd hope with Wacom, this stylus is rather good.

While it doesn't contain any fancy tech to give pressure sensitivity, the finesse is in the design. Built to feel like a pencil, it's beautifully light yet with just the right amount of additional weight at the nib end to give you consistent contact with the iPad while you're working. As you move the rubber tip over the screen, the motion is smooth, although there is a bit more resistance than we'd have liked.

At 6mm across, the nib's as small as can be used on the iPad or iPhone, and feels more precise than chunkier competitors. It's exchangeable too, so there may yet be other variants in the future. To use the pen at a lower angle – perhaps to shade – remove the metal cylinder around the tip. Unorthodox, but it works a treat.

SENSU BRUSH

Price $40 **Company** Sensu
Web www.sensubrush.com

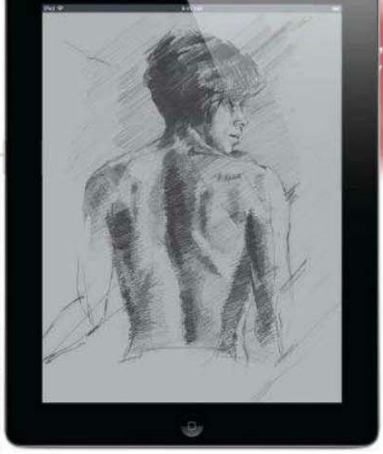
The Sensu is no ordinary brush. Instead of using animal hair, the Sensu bristles are synthetic and made conductive using a nanotechnology treatment first developed for the Japanese cosmetics industry. The result is a brush that looks like a million dollars and paints as smoothly with pixels as real brushes do with oils.

Instead of your fat fingers fumbling to address details in sketches, the brush springs to life, working all the way down to pixel level. Strokes and lines feel easy and natural, and the Sensu is precise and well balanced in the hand.

On older devices there's a little lag but on iPad 3 and Samsung Note 10.1 you'll find it fine. Overall though, the Sensu brush isn't just a stylish iPad accessory, it's near essential for anyone wanting to use their iPad for digital art. It definitely gets a big thumbs up – let's hope international sales start shortly.

BRUSH STROKES

With its conductive bristles, the Sensu Brush stylus offers the feel of traditional painting



A pressure-sensitive stylus can make a real difference when sketching on the iPad

choosing a decent, accurate stylus is vital. The recent Adonit Jot Pro features a circular transparent disc to push against. The new king of the hill however is the Pogo Connect. It's magnetic replaceable rubber nib delivers fantastic tonal graduation and line consistency. And, because you can change nib sizes, there's room to develop and experiment.

> **“Where possible, try before you buy, and aim for a quality stylus that will last”**

CHOOSE NIBS AND NUBBINS

The general nub is made of foam rubber and while this is chunky and a little hard to get used to, it is still smaller than a fingertip. Ideal for iPad users, these rubber nibs offer great hand-to-eye coordination and slide across the screen smoothly.

Then you have the plastic nib style, as seen in the Adonit Jot Touch. While these offer decent pressure sensitivity, you do need to push a little harder against the iPad screen to draw. They also don't glide as easily as the standard rubber nib.

The brush tip, as used by the Nomad Brush and the Sensu Brush, uses conductive fibres to offer a painterly, traditional experience. While these tips aren't any more accurate than the standard tips, they do offer the sensation of painting that few stylus come close to. Not ideal for sketching, but great to splash some colour around and have some fun.

JOT TOUCH

Price £75 **Company** Adonit
Web www.adonit.net

The Jot Touch – necessarily – packs an impressive dollop of tech into a small form. It connects to your device via Bluetooth, and thus includes a (non-accessible) battery to charge the device. It's about the same length as a ballpoint pen, but chunkier and heavier.

You'll need to use specific apps with the Jot Touch stylus to make the most of its capabilities, such as leading software SketchBook, Procreate and ArtRage. All these apps include Adonit-endorsed pressure-sensitivity, but the Jot Touch will work as a normal 'dumb' stylus with apps that don't, such as Photoshop Express.

The pressure-sensitivity works well. You don't have to press too hard to achieve a better flow on your virtual ink, but there's a slight amount of give as you touch the Jot Touch to the screen. The tip itself features a small transparent plastic disc with a metal centre, which allows for accurate drawing because the iPad screen essentially thinks you're working with a really weird finger.

The Jot Touch is never going to match a Wacom tablet's levels of sensitivity – the iPad is too much of a one-size-fits-all device, and there's a little lag in all the compatible apps. However, it solves the iPad's biggest problem for digital artists, and feels natural and smooth to hold and use. We think that it'll become an essential part of most toolkits.

iPEN

Price $50 **Company** Cregle
Web www.cregle.com

Proximity sensitivity, precise mark-making and palm rejection are the three hallmarks of Cregle's new iPen. The iPen stands out because it looks like a pen. The clumsy rubber 'button' of most stylus has been replaced by a small, thin pen nib that offers remarkably precise line drawing. The iPen's receiver connects to the iPad's UART port and, like Wacom's Inkling, can detect the pen's location via ultrasonic and infrared signals.

It's a costly device but more than makes up for it in style and function, however there's no pressure sensitity and the reciever solution can feel a little clumsy compared to other stylus.

ARTIST INTERVIEW

PAUL TYSALL

The freelance artist and illustrator talks iPads, apps and art

How do you find the iPad for creating digital art?
Most of my illustrations now begin life on the iPad, from composition thumbnails to base sketches or rough preliminary paintings.

Do you use a stylus or your finger more often?
I never use my finger to paint. For drawing I use the PenGo stylus. If I'm going to paint in ArtRage I'll reach for the Nomad Brush.

How did you find the Jot Touch to hold?
The weighting feels sturdy. The functions buttons are a tad too shallow, and they could do with moving back up the shaft a bit – basically they could learn from looking at the Wacom Grip Pen.

Does the pressure-sensitivity make a noticeable difference?
I was dubious at first, until I started sketching with Procreate's pencils. It works, but can be a tad random at times. You need to tweak the tool settings with ArtRage brushes to find a sweet spot.

How is the battery life on the stylus?
Good, but when it runs out, naturally it still works as a stylus but you lose the pressure-sensitivity, which initially had me wondering what had happened to my brush settings.

Which apps did you use?
I tested it with Procreate and ArtRage. I used it mainly to sketch seeing as the Jot Touch is engineered for precision – hence the clear plastic tip and pivot design – and both performed well.

Did you find yourself assigning the shortcut buttons?
ArtRage hasn't equipped them yet. Procreate has them preset to Undo/Redo, which is handy, but it would be good to assign the functionality you want, such as brush size.

Paul is an highly experienced art editor and illustrator, having worked on Future's ImagineFX magazine.

www.tysall.com

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO…

PICKING AN ART APP

While the professional software that has dominated digital art for so long is available on iPad and Android devices, they are not always first choice for tablets. So what should you look for when picking an app?

TOOLS

On a tablet you'll find your needs differ to painting on a desktop set-up. For example most plein air painters will only use three to four basic brushes. Understand how you will use the app and pick it to fit.

INTERFACE

With many apps offering similar brushes and options, the user interface becomes king. Apps such as ArtRage, Sketchbook Pro and Procreate have become leaders in simplifying some deep options.

FILE MANAGEMENT

The exporting and importing of files, especially to third-party apps, needs to be explored before purchase. What formats can you save to? Can you export layered files or only flattened jpegs?

PIXELS

Older iPads and Android tablets are limited by the resolution of the screen, usually 1024x768, often resulting in blurry images. This has changed with the new iPad's Retina display as well as Android tablets such as the Asus TF700, the Acer A700 and the Nexus 10.

> “On a tablet, with many apps offering similar brushes and options, the user interface becomes king”

VECTORS

Vector-based apps have the option of enlarging exported images to any defined size. They are great for specialised art work, such as creating icons or line art, but for general art and digital painting are limited.

UNIVERSAL APPS

Consider if you need to buy multiple apps for each device you use. If you want to sketch on your iPhone as well as your iPad you may need to buy slightly different versions of the same app.

VIDEO PLAYBACK

Some apps give you the ability to record your painting as you go. Brushes, ArtRage and Layers all support video playback.

THE BEST APPS AVAILABLE

There are many great painting apps available for iPad and Android devices. Here's some of the best

ARTRAGE

Device iOS **Price** £2.99 **Company** ArtRage Ent. **Web** www.artrage.com

One of the best budget art apps on the market, ArtRage for iPad offers a simple interface coupled with the kind of real media tools you'd find in top tier software like Painter.

The two bottom corners present touch-sensitive buttons that reveal brushes and pens to the left, and the colour palette to the right.

The brushes are as capable as you'd expect from ArtRage's pedigree, with oil, watercolour and airbrush among the media provided. Once you've laid down some paint, a Palette Knife tool enables you to smear it around. You can also create line art with a pencil, pen or crayon. Sliders enable you to adjust size and pressure, along with media-specific options such as drying time for paint. When you establish a combination of settings you like, you can save it to a preset list to access at any time.

There are plenty of custom options, layers and blending modes that work in a similar way to Photoshop. These, coupled with Watercolour mode that enhances your paint based on thickness, make ArtRage a joy to use, especially for digital sketching and plein air painting.

PHOTOSHOP TOUCH

Device iOS & Android **Price** £6.99 **Company** Adobe **Web** www.adobe.com

Using Adobe Creative Cloud, this app provides a link between Photoshop on your desktop or laptop and Photoshop on your tablet. You can start work on the desktop, upload to the Creative Cloud, and then carry on working. You can also create new projects from scratch, or use a photo on your device or the web as a starting point.

You won't find the kind of range on offer in such apps as ArtRage and Procreate. What you do get though is a simple, easy-to-control brush interface where you can quickly change scale and hardness, along with being able to specify whether pressure sensitivity affects size and opacity. There is also an impressive image-editing feature set. You can use your finger (or a stylus) to Select, Clone, Dodge, Burn and perform other common tasks. You can crop, adjust levels and curves, change colour balance, add text, warp images and more. There's also the ability to create layers with blending modes and add filter effects.

Photoshop Touch may not have the digital painting functionality of some other apps out there, but, as a general tool it's an absolutely brilliant app.

OTHER CREATIVE TOOLS

Adobe Collage

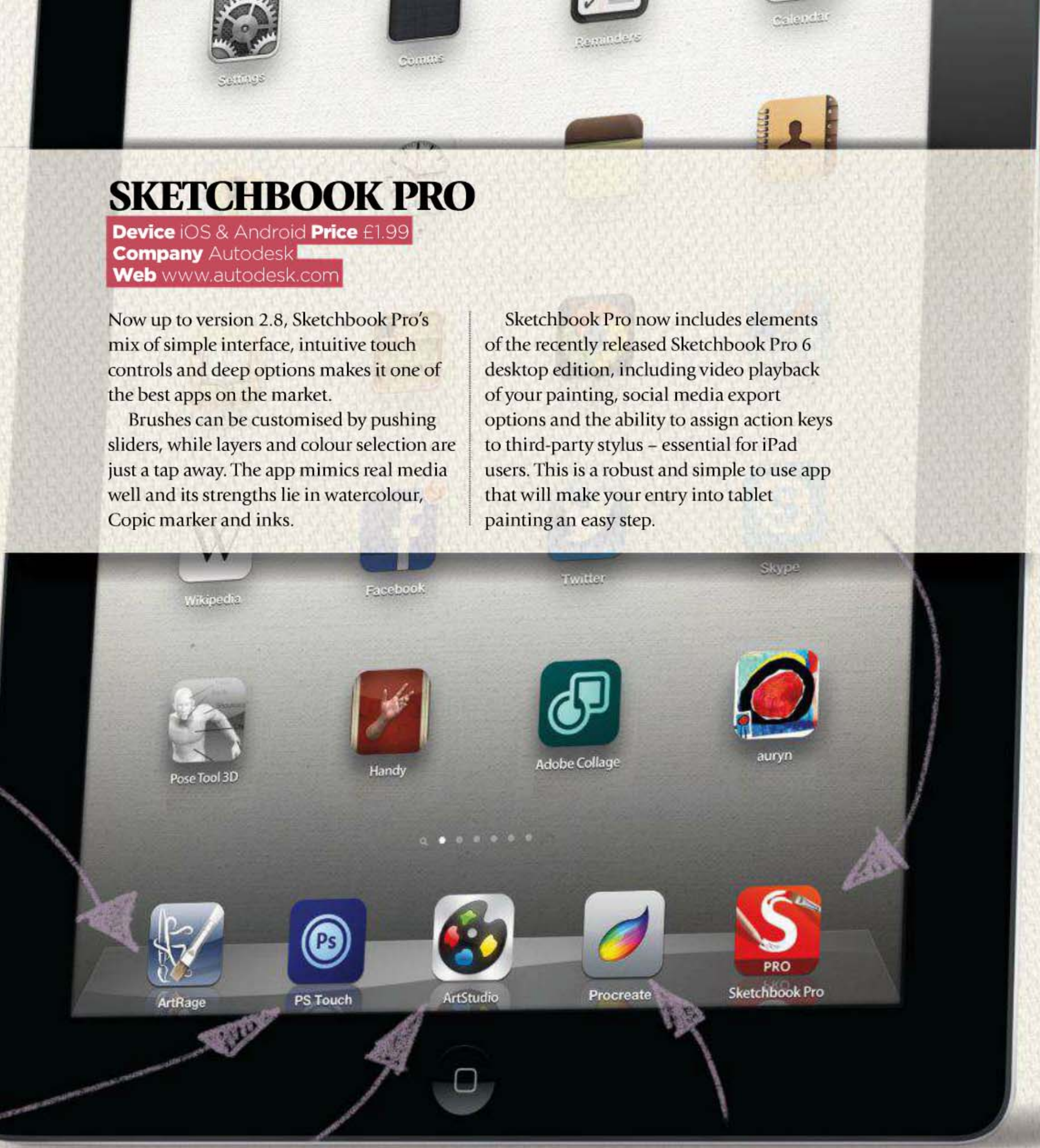
Device iOS & Android
Price £6.99
Web www.bit.ly/adobe_collage

Adobe Collage is a portable mood board that you can use before starting a project. Reference material can be imported straight from your tablet's camera, Google and even YouTube, and you can draw straight into your collage.

Pose Tool 3D

Device iOS & Android
Price £2.49 (iOS) £2.47 (Android)
Web www.alienthink.com

Pose Tool 3D enables artists to manipulate a 3D model into any kind of pose. Once you get a feel for it, this is a great reference tool for digital artists. It also includes an anatomy mode featuring detailed muscle maps.



SKETCHBOOK PRO

Device iOS & Android **Price** £1.99
Company Autodesk
Web www.autodesk.com

Now up to version 2.8, Sketchbook Pro's mix of simple interface, intuitive touch controls and deep options makes it one of the best apps on the market.

Brushes can be customised by pushing sliders, while layers and colour selection are just a tap away. The app mimics real media well and its strengths lie in watercolour, Copic marker and inks.

Sketchbook Pro now includes elements of the recently released Sketchbook Pro 6 desktop edition, including video playback of your painting, social media export options and the ability to assign action keys to third-party stylus – essential for iPad users. This is a robust and simple to use app that will make your entry into tablet painting an easy step.

ARTSTUDIO

Device iOS & Android **Price** £2.99
Company Lucky Clan
Web www.iphoneclan.com

This neat app stands out as care has been paid to ensure it works perfectly on the iPad. The touch screen inputs are clever and intuitive; tapping and holding brings up a colour picker; a double tap brings up resizing and interface options; a swipe clears the canvas of all toolsets. ArtStudio packs plenty of varying brush options and has a good layer system.

It also enables you to record the last five layers of painting, rounding off an excellent introductory app to digital painting.

Think about what you want to use your app for, and pick one to suit your needs

PROCREATE

Device iOS & Android **Price** £2.99
Company Savage Interactive
Web www.procreate.si

Procreate looks great and is a pleasure to use. The size and opacity sliders down the left-hand side mean you can quickly adjust both properties while painting.

There's also a superb brush editor. Not only can you tweak shape and grain, you can also import a shape and a grain file from your iPad's photo album. Just like Photoshop, you have full control over brush shapes and textures.

Procreate is easy to use and a great tool for seasoned and beginner artists alike.

Handy – An Artist's Reference Tool

Device iOS & Android
Price £1.49 (iOS) £0.63 (Android)
Web www.handyarttool.com

Drawing hands is a lot easier with this app. It comes with 24 different poses that can be applied to left and right hands, modelled in full 3D.

Color Pal

Device Android
Price Free
Web www.bit.ly/color_pal

This free app offers a comprehensive colour guide, with all of the latest shades from www.colourlovers.com. It also provides HEX, RGB and CMYK colour values, and the ability to browse through related colour palettes.

mara3D Facial Expressions Featuring Steven Stahlberg

Device iOS & Android
Price £2.49 (iOS) Free (Android)
Web www.mara3d.com

This app provides a customisable reference tool for facial expressions. Start out by choosing a specified emotion, and then tweak away until you're happy with the end result.

ARTIST INTERVIEW

BOBBY CHU

Bobby's art is currently being used to showcase SketchBook Pro

What do you like about the desktop and iPad versions of SketchBook Pro?

What I like about the desktop SketchBook Pro is that you don't really need to use your keyboard very much. SketchBook Pro on the iPad follows suit and makes a lot of sense, because it doesn't have a physical keyboard that I would use in tandem with the brushes.

What do you think of the kinds of creative apps available on tablets and phones?

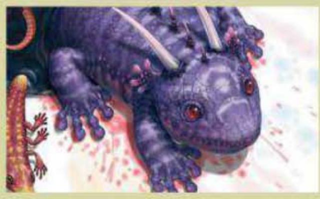
I think it's fantastic for professionals and beginners alike. It would be amazing to eventually be able to paint as freely on your phone or tablet as you can on a desktop computer. It would be much easier to paint on the move, and at least then we wouldn't be constricted to our studio spaces!

Do you think that artists will be able to use apps to create art as good as they can on a desktop?

Yes, it's not quite there yet, but it's getting closer with every new software version or innovative new program. Eventually, I think that professional artists will be able to create pieces just as good as those achieved on a desktop computer.

Do you think that apps are making it easier to experiment with digital art?

Absolutely. Traditional painting is messy, and art software for computers can sometimes feel very overwhelming. By their very nature, apps feel so much more simple to understand and are less intimidating to use.



Bobby Chui is an artist in the film and animation industries and a teacher who runs the successful Imaginism Studios.

www.imaginismstudios.com

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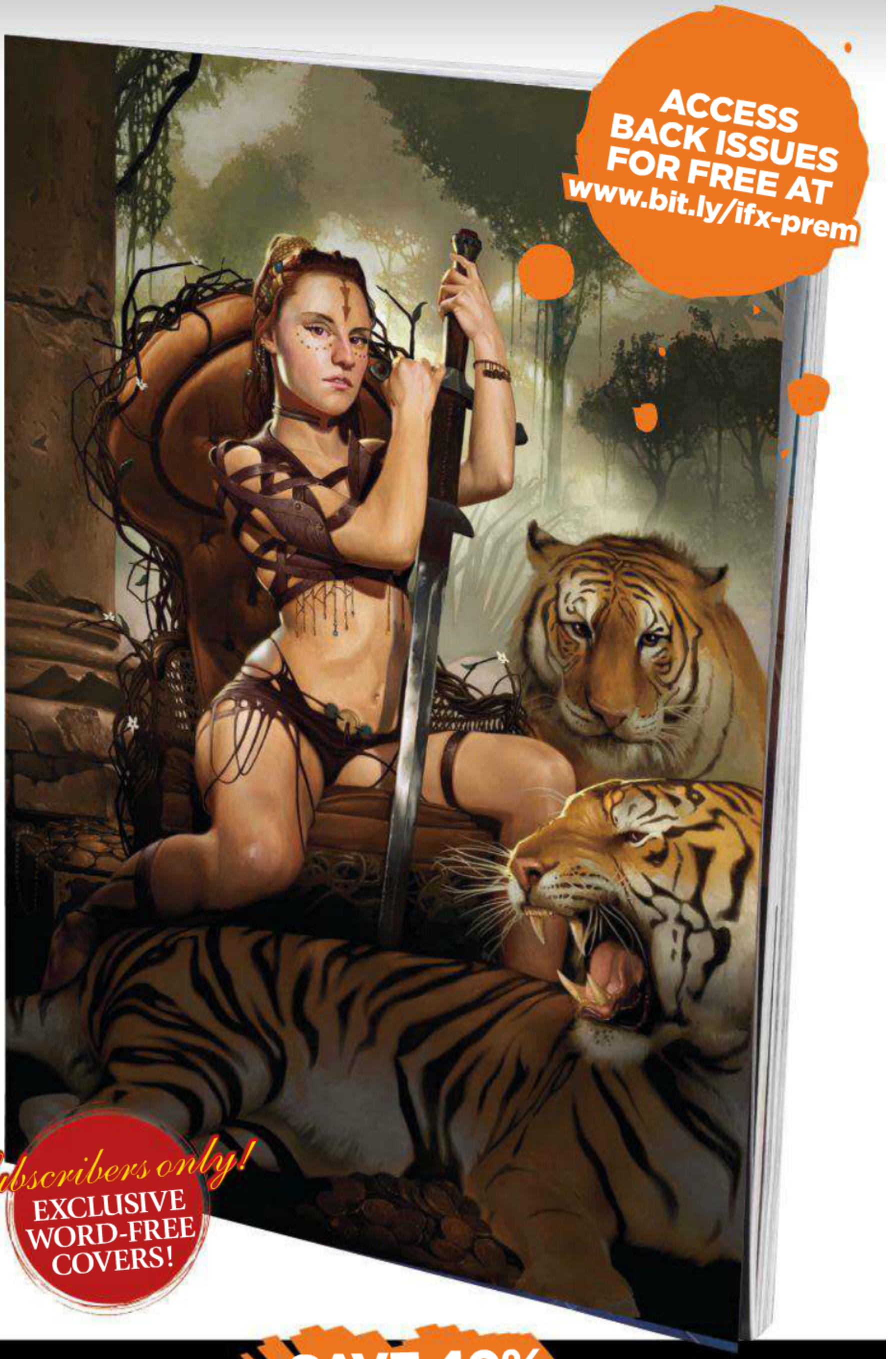
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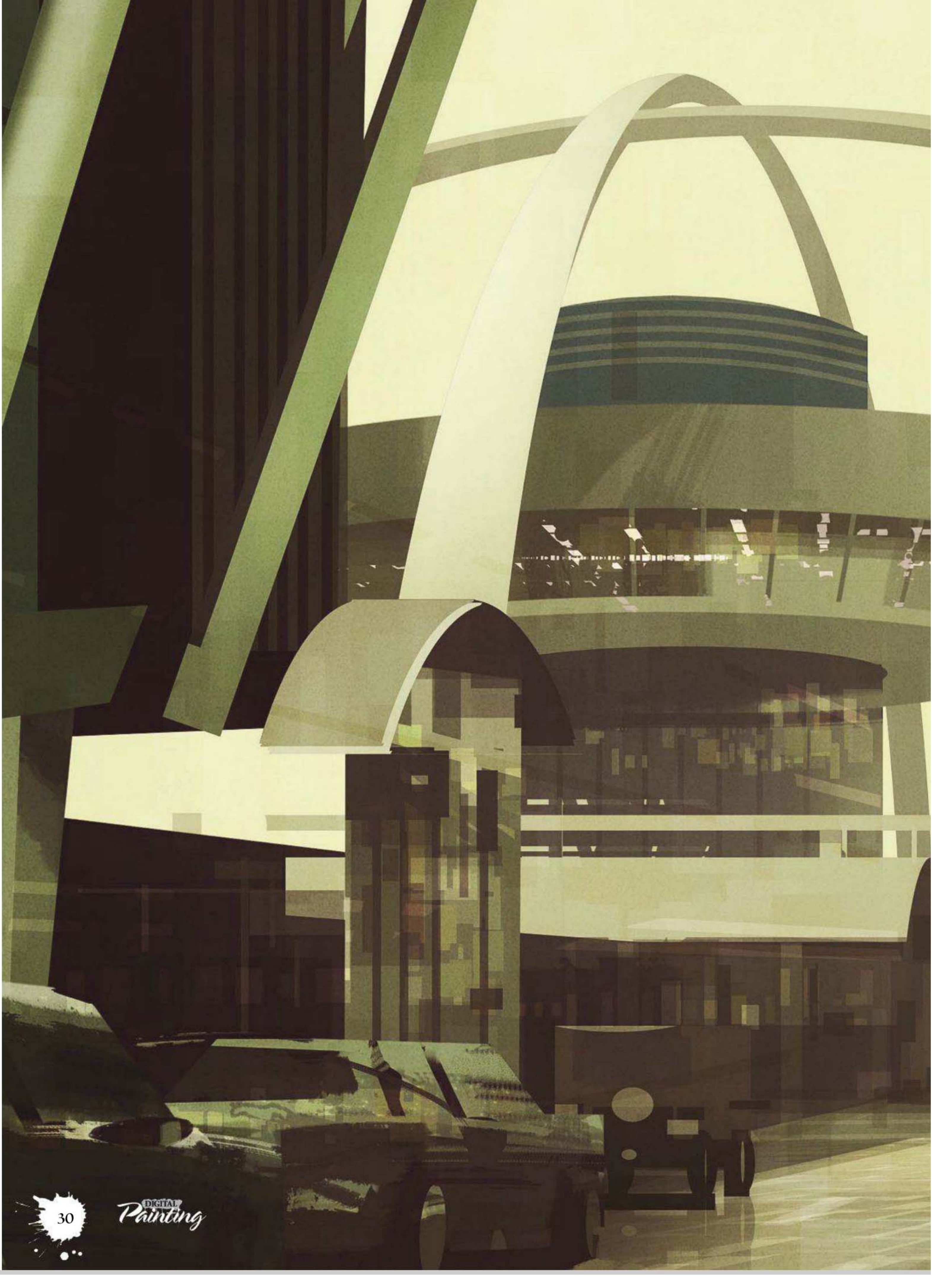
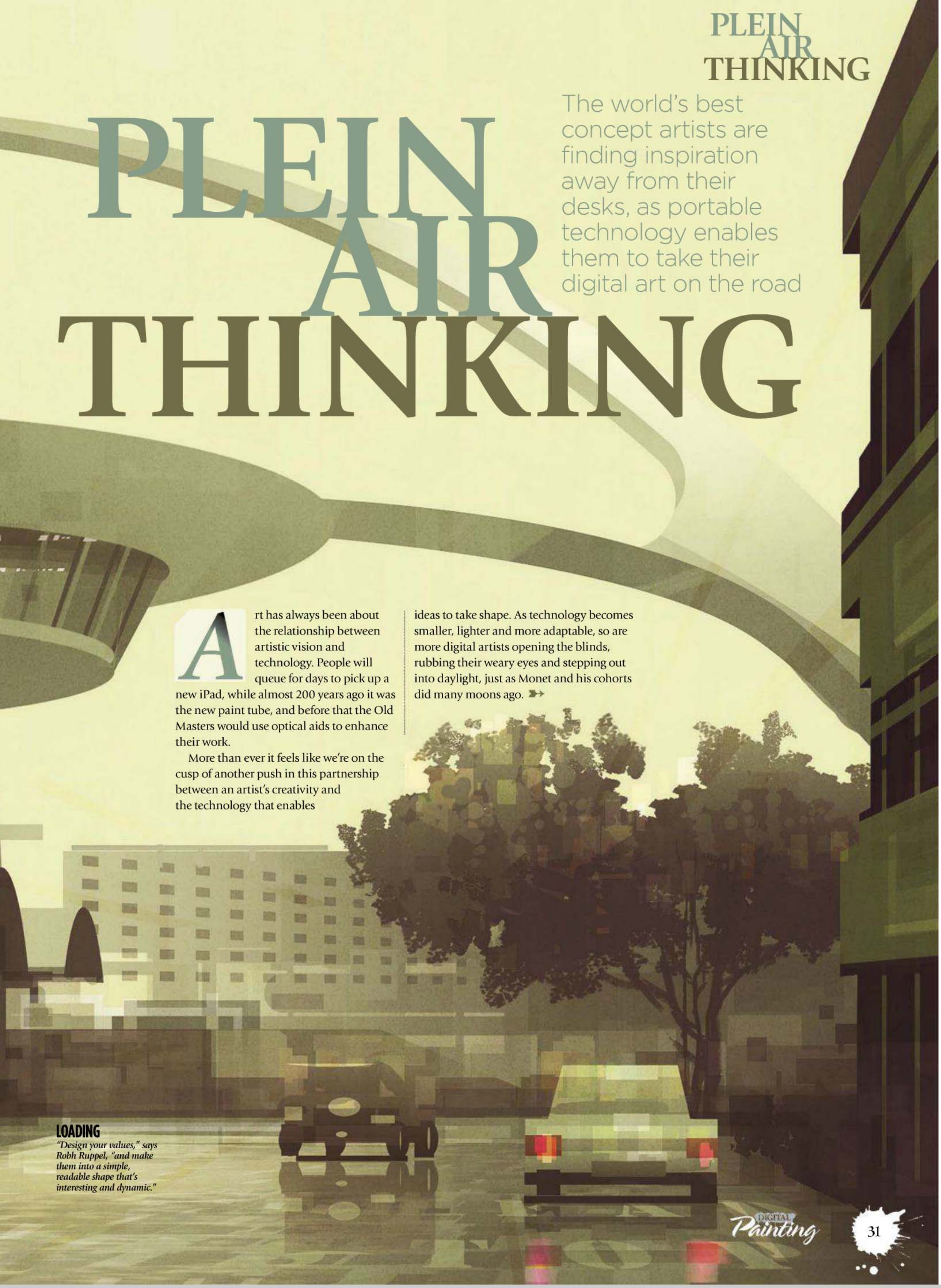


PLEIN AIR THINKING

The world's best concept artists are finding inspiration away from their desks, as portable technology enables them to take their digital art on the road

Art has always been about the relationship between artistic vision and technology. People will queue for days to pick up a new iPad, while almost 200 years ago it was the new paint tube, and before that the Old Masters would use optical aids to enhance their work.

More than ever it feels like we're on the cusp of another push in this partnership between an artist's creativity and the technology that enables ideas to take shape. As technology becomes smaller, lighter and more adaptable, so are more digital artists opening the blinds, rubbing their weary eyes and stepping out into daylight, just as Monet and his cohorts did many moons ago. ➳

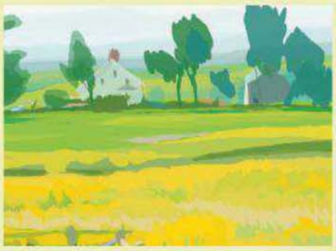


LOADING
"Design your values," says Robh Ruppel, "and make them into a simple, readable shape that's interesting and dynamic."

ARTIST INTERVIEW

NICK PUGH

The artist talks plein air's challenges, techniques and future



What's the biggest challenge for digital plein air?
Aside from glare and reflections on the screen, the hardest part is bringing emotion and originality into the work. Many people can paint what they see, but it often looks similar. So how do you set your work apart?

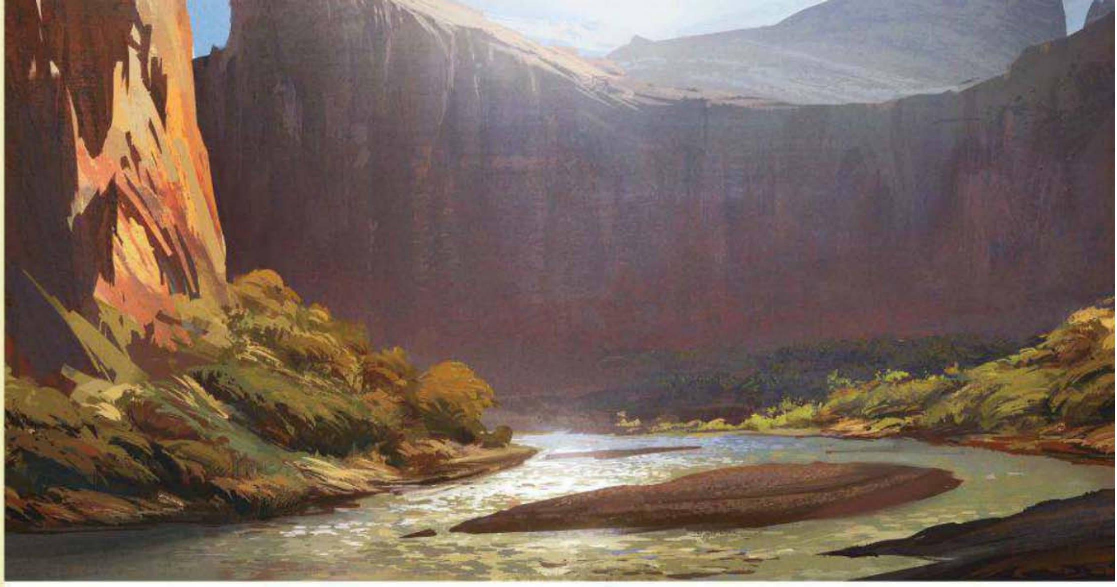
Any technique advice?
For architecture I tend to sketch in the perspective with lines, then fill in the spaces afterwards. For landscapes I like to block in forms with large swaths of colour and value before I hit the details.

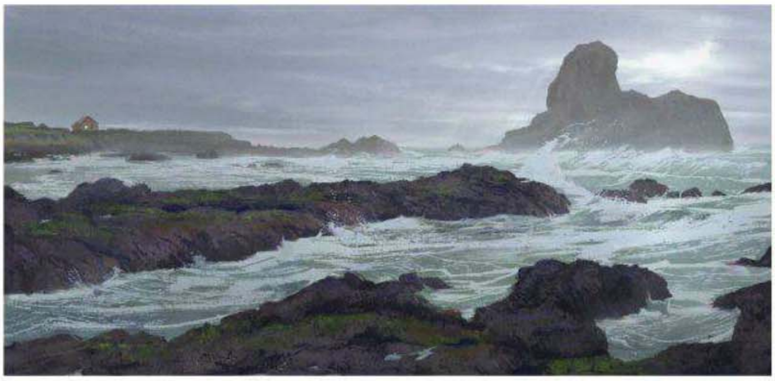
What's the future of digital plein air painting?
I want a new type of screen with a bright coloured opaque surface that looks best in bright sunlight. E-ink and Kindle have sort of done this, but the quality isn't there yet.

The other big issue is the final image as a printed art piece. These days we can print on all kinds of medium, but it doesn't compare to the visceral value of a real oil painting. The texture, colour density and depth are more compelling in original art seen in a physical form. I could imagine futuristic technologies that print digital paintings using thick paint and some sort of a robotic 'painter'. Or imagine a device that's a 'wet' print surface and the wet paint catalyses into a hard sheet that you can peel off as an original piece. Or we could work with the inherent ephemeral qualities of the medium as a digital-only form and find ways to present and sell the art on screen.

Nick teaches digital landscape painting at Art Center, CA, and wrote Luminair, the first book on the subject, in 2006.

www.nickpugh.com





ANGLE'S LANDING
Eytan Zana was struck by the lighting at Angel's Landing on a painting trip to Moab, "It was a great opportunity to experiment with a lot of elements such as the water, the 'bloom' effect, and I felt the shapes on their own were really dynamic."

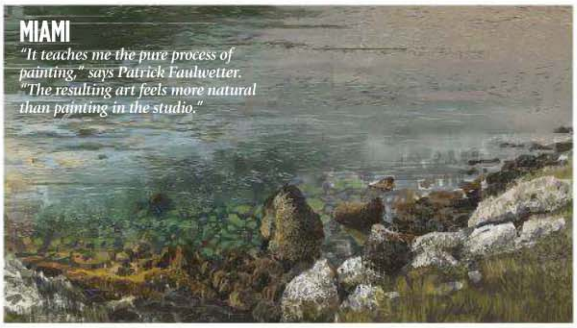
PIEDRAS BLANCAS
"We're feeble artists, so when it comes to adventuring any minor obstacles it makes us feel like Bear Grylls," says Shaddy Safadi.

Digital plein air painting appeals to digital artists looking to walk away from their desks and use traditional art theory and technique to improve their artistic process. The iPad has become a replacement for the sketchpad, while many artists fold a laptop and Wacom tablet into a backpack and take the studio outside.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Concept artist Patrick Faulwetter has been digital plein air painting for years. He uses a 17-inch MacBook and a Wacom Bamboo, preferring this set-up to a tablet computer because the laptop has a matte finish: "This avoids reflecting surrounding light, and I can use hotkeys too, mainly for brush size.

"Using a tablet would look much more elegant than using a laptop. Maybe people wouldn't ask me what I'm doing all the time, sitting in the middle of nowhere with my laptop."



MIAMI
"It teaches me the pure process of painting," says Patrick Faulwetter. "The resulting art feels more natural than painting in the studio."

> **"This linkage between artistic vision and technology is at the heart of digital plein air painting"**

ARTIST TIP

PAINTING NATURAL LIGHT

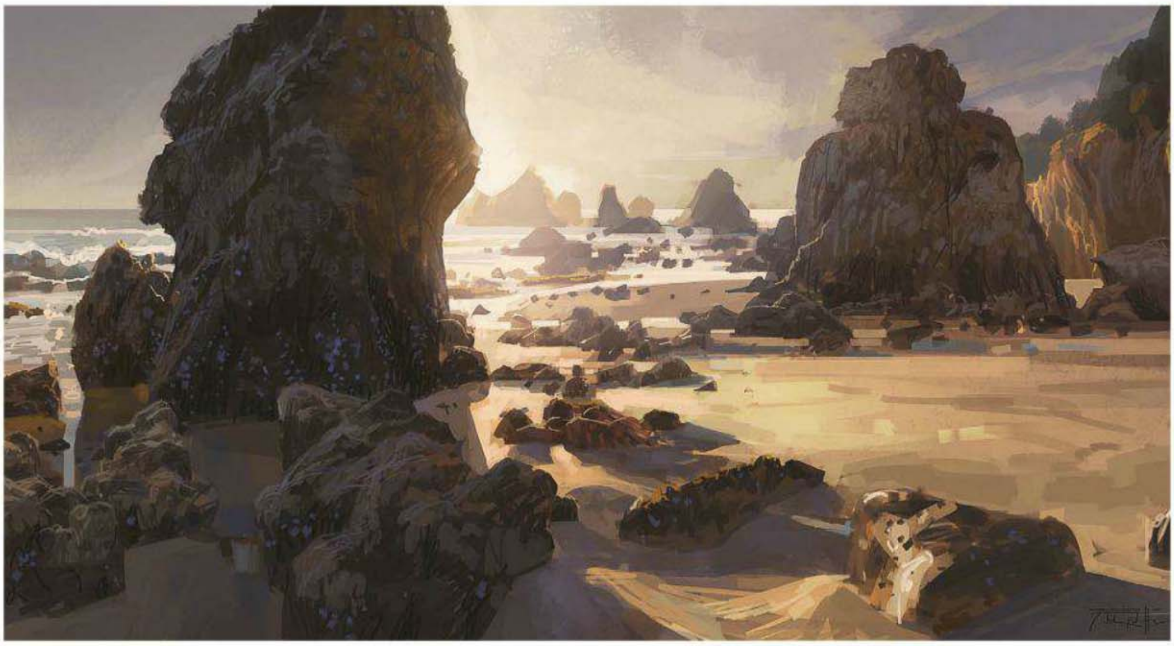
"Being outdoors, your light source is going to be constantly moving, so it's important you get your light shapes (the areas where light is hitting things to define form) all in order very quickly."
Eytan Zana

Concept artist Nick Gindraux takes a Intuos4 medium on his travels because the tablet's Quick Keys and Touch Strip enables him to access brush sizes – something useful that's lacking on the more mobile iPad.

Conversely, Robh Ruppel is an advocate of the iPad and treats the device like a portable easel. Using a standard camera tripod, Robh mounts his iPad and paints in a traditional manner.

"For me, the iPhone and then the iPad were the biggest leaps forward because they enabled me to work site to size, which means you're reproducing the visual impression as closely as possible by keeping the proportions of what you're painting the same as the scene."

This 'one-to-one' painting, used by traditional artists like John Singer Sargent, enables you to flick your eyes from the screen to the scene and back again quickly. Working this way means you can "make direct comparisons between shape and value," explains Robh.



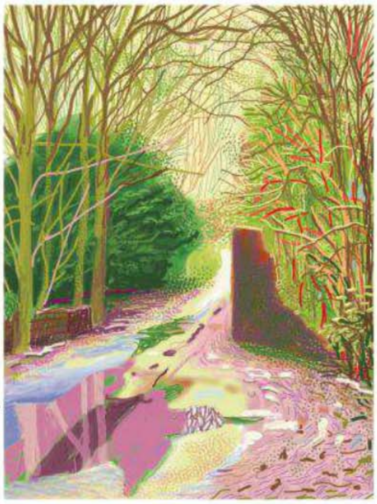
EL MATADOR, MALIBU

"You start to go through life like a location scout, always analysing your surroundings to find a good spot," jokes Patrick Faulwetter.

ARTIST TIP

RENDERING FOG

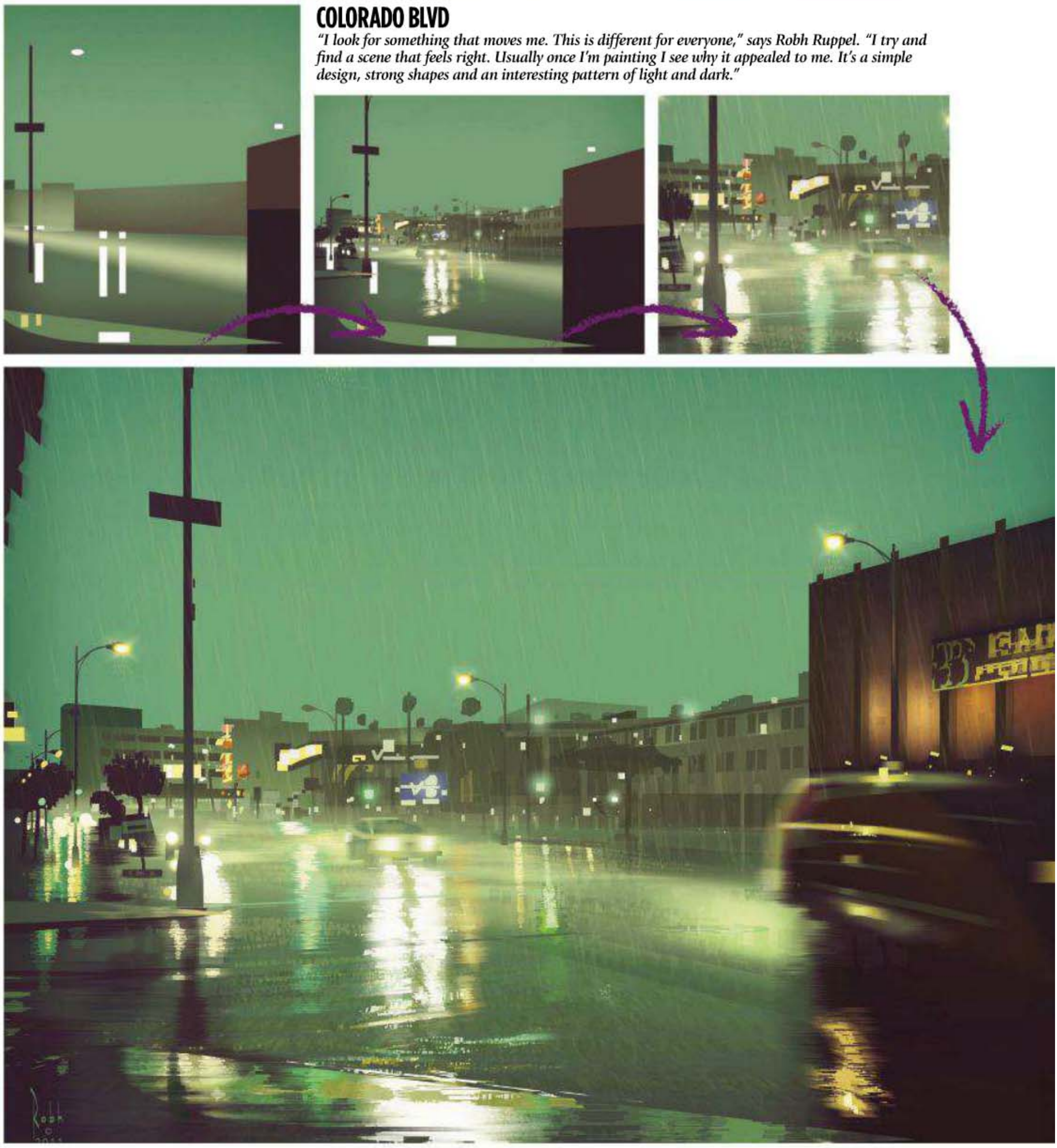
"Try using a big soft round brush or gradients. The Lighten layer mode is pretty helpful for adding atmosphere."
Eytan Zana



© David Hockney

THE ARRIVAL OF SPRING IN WOLDGATE, 2 JANUARY

David Hockney's exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, in 2012 featured 52 iPad paintings, such as this one that surrounded a larger 32-canvas landscape painted in oils.



COLORADO BLVD

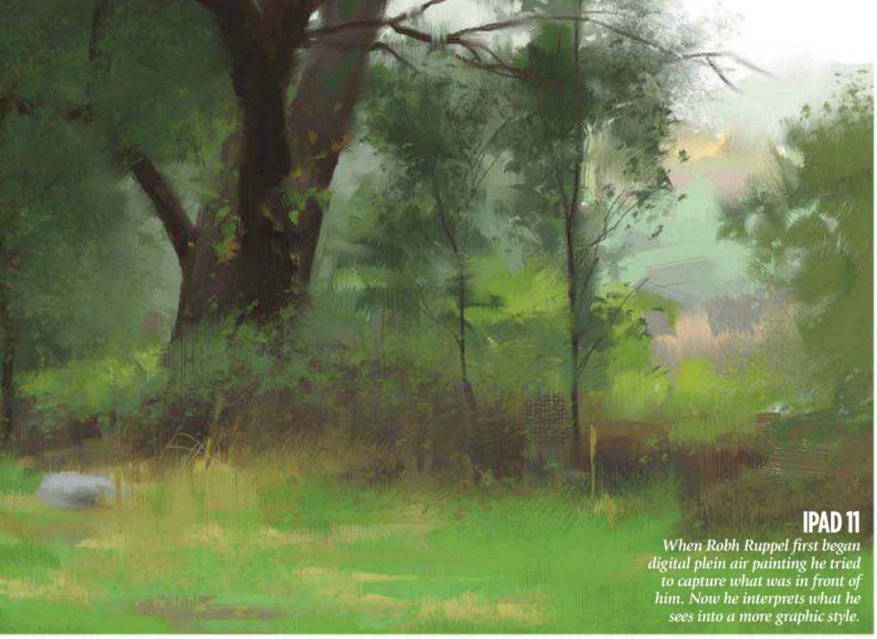
"I look for something that moves me. This is different for everyone," says Robh Ruppel. "I try and find a scene that feels right. Usually once I'm painting I see why it appealed to me. It's a simple design, strong shapes and an interesting pattern of light and dark."

There's a direct link between digital plein air painting and its traditional counterpart. While technology enables new approaches, styles, access and uses of the final painting, the process of an artist interpreting their surroundings is as alive now, as it was when The Impressionists took to the streets of Paris. Likewise, this new 'digital impressionism' is equally immediate and emotional, "I believe this new style is an art form unto itself," says Nick Pugh, who teaches digital landscape painting at Art Center in Pasadena, US.

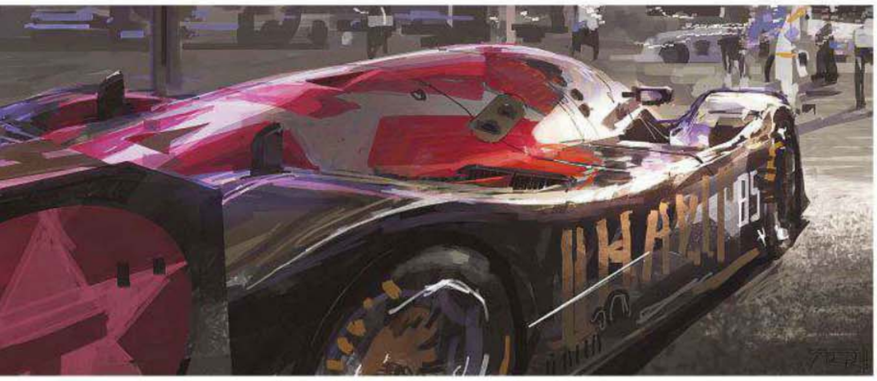
SAME BUT DIFFERENT

"It's similar to traditional painting because it's the artist's hand that creates the image, but it's similar to photography because there's a technical device between the

➸



IPAD 11
When Robh Ruppel first began digital plein air painting he tried to capture what was in front of him. Now he interprets what he sees into a more graphic style.



PORSCHE REUNION
Patrick Faulwetter started as a vehicle designer at Volkswagen, and still has a love for car design. "Paint what you love," is his advice to finding the perfect location.

subject and the creator," explains Nick. "This new art form is in its early stages of development, similar to where photography was in the early 20th century."

Clearly the technology itself can cause problems, such as limited battery life, screen glare and the logistical hurdles of packing laptops, tablets and other tools for a day's digital painting. And you need to contend with the environment, the heat, the cold, bugs, wind, tides and tiredness.

"Once you've crossed that hump, gotten your composition down and stopped to look around," says Shaddy Safadi, a concept artist who runs California's Digital Plein Air Society, "you realise it's a badass way for nerds to get away from the desk!"

The artistic rewards of connecting with the subject matter is forcing artists to come up with ways to overcome the problems of dragging a digital setup outside. While some are simple – "I wear black to prevent screen glare," says Nick – others' solutions are more complex. Shaddy has designed a simple cardboard shade box that fits over the screen like an old photographer's hood to stave off screen glare.

Overriding all the hurdles is the desire to reconnect with art fundamentals. Famously, Howard Pyle made his students stand in a cold stream to paint 'cold', and now digital artists are putting themselves through a similar test.

> **" It's important to be on location to 'feel' the environment, atmosphere and the subtleties in colour "**

"It's important to be on location to 'feel' the environment, atmosphere and the subtleties in colour," says Patrick, who's endured sandstorms, tropical thunderstorms and more to paint digital landscapes.

A solution Patrick's discovered is to turn his attention to large designed spaces: airports, hotels and shopping malls. "Painting these places helps me understand how they were designed," he says. "Sometimes it feels more challenging than landscapes, because the design logic behind the space keeps me away from just thinking in terms of palette and composition."

Every artist looks for something different in whatever they're painting. Robh says he looks for something that moves him, but over the years his interpretation of what he sees has changed. When he began painting he would use many brushes and layers. "But lately I've wanted to get to the essence of the visual impression with the simplest tools possible," says Robh, who now uses just the Square tool, a Square brush, Line tool and a few gradients. "I redesign/simplify shapes, producing a graphic approximation of what I'm seeing rather than a naturalistic translation."

BE HERE NOW

Similarly Nick is attracted by the immediacy and purity of painting digitally outdoors. "I like to heighten the feeling of 'being there' by using exaggerated or

The team, from left to right: John Sweeny, Yohann Schepacz, Shaddy Safadi and Eytan Zana.

BEHIND THE SCENES

THERE AND BACK AGAIN

Don't paint by yourself, says Shaddy Safadi. Instead, explore with art groups and share the costs and planning

When not working at Naughty Dog, Shaddy Safadi runs the Digital Plein Air Society. This Los Angeles-based art group meet once a week to paint in the LA area, but every year they also stretch their legs and take on the wider world.

The most recent annual excursion took the group to southern Europe, a 30-day painting trip that included the French and Italian Alps, Genoa, Cinque Terre, Florence, Venice, Lake Como, Milan, Chamonix and Nice.

"For 30 days, every day was one of the best days of our lives," says Shaddy who spent a month planning the trip using, amongst other things, Google Earth.

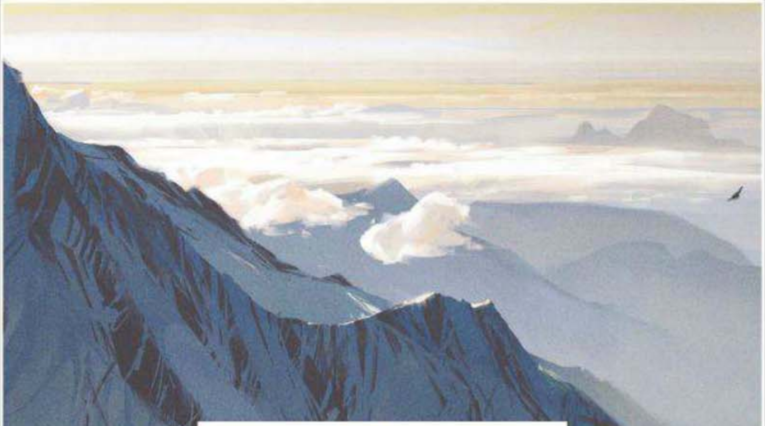
"I've never travelled with artists before and have to say it's not often five people will simultaneously squeal with delight and make you pull over the car to watch the way sunset fog is rolling into a valley."

Before they'd venture out, the team of artists checked their kit and thought ahead. Although they'd planned to create specific brushes ahead of time, Shaddy says in practice this doesn't work: "It's better to be creative with a few great, all-purpose brushes". Furthermore, bigger problems meet the intrepid digital artist in the field. "Drivers will crash, light will change and batteries will run out at inopportune times, so suck it up! That's the price you pay for awesomeness."

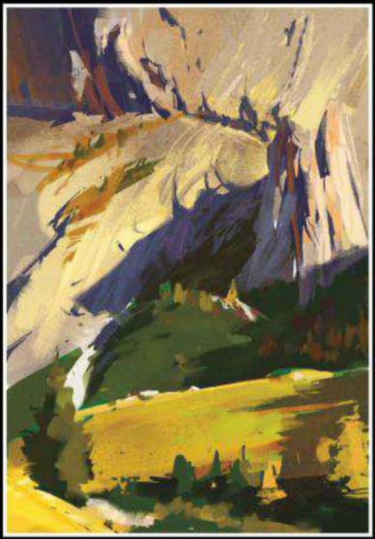
ARTIST TIP

COMP IS KING

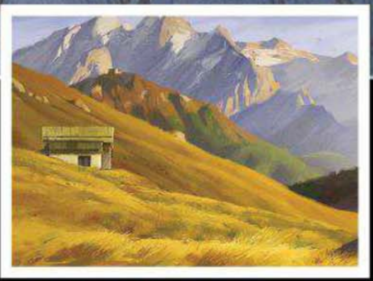
"Paint, even digital paint, can't reproduce the dynamic range our eyes are capable of seeing. It does a better job with easy to read, simple, concise layouts. A good painting has one main idea and a few supporting ideas."
Robh Ruppel



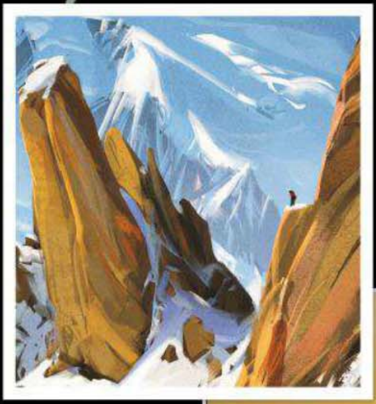
AIGUILLE DU MIDI, CHAMONIX, FRANCE
"The challenge I'm trying to tackle with this kind of mountain vista is how to indicate the scale of the little snow bits without having it look noisy – like it does in real life – and keep the painterly style."



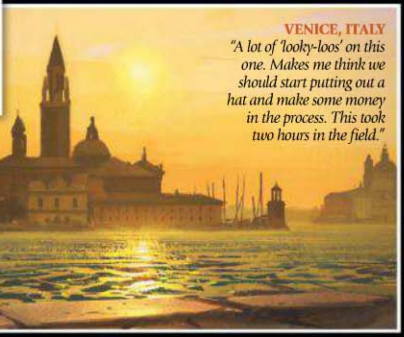
VAL GARDENA, SUDTIROL, ITALY
"A purely delightful two-day painting trip. The first was at this driveable mountain pass in the Italian Alps. Everywhere you looked hurt your face from sheer awesomeness."



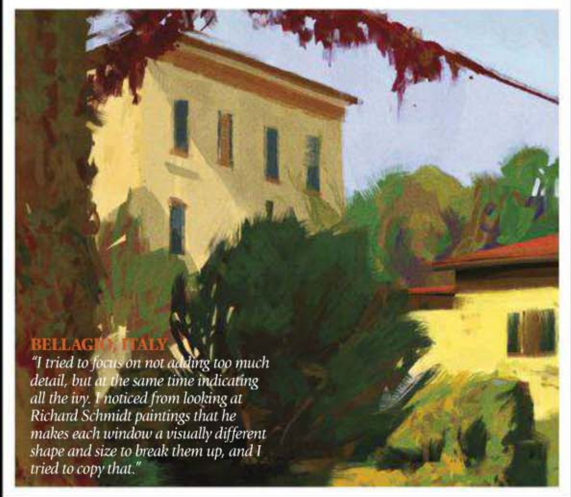
SELLA PASS, CANAZEI, ITALY
"The second painting of the day of Sella Pass in the Italian Alps. Two hours in the field, two hours at home adding details and working on edges."



AIGUILLE DU MIDI, CHAMONIX, FRANCE
"This was painted with the usual process, black and erased white block-in with some juicy brushes applied to locked layers and then a little edge blending and overpainting at the end with the Mixer brush tool in CS5."



VENICE, ITALY
"A lot of 'looky-loos' on this one. Makes me think we should start putting out a hat and make some money in the process. This took two hours in the field."



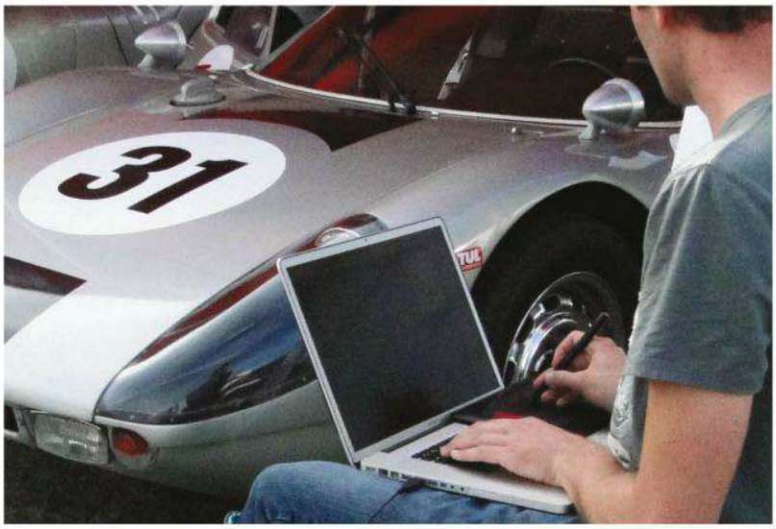
BELLAGIO, ITALY
"I tried to focus on not adding too much detail, but at the same time indicating all the ivy. I noticed from looking at Richard Schmidt paintings that he makes each window a visually different shape and size to break them up, and I tried to copy that."

distorted shapes and colours," he says. "I like to play with scale and composition."

Patrick has also found the speed and immediacy of painting digital plein air has affected his process. When painting outdoors he limits his workflow to two or three brushes and uses just a few layers. Ironically, for an artist who never painted traditionally, as his technique gets simpler and more focused his digital painting process is becoming more traditional.

"It teaches me the pure process of painting," he says, "it's just about observing and putting down colours. Outside I always see new interesting things, such as lighting scenarios, colour combinations and value patterns, which I can save in my mind. I recall and integrate these in my work."

While digital art tools have always enabled artists to take their work to a

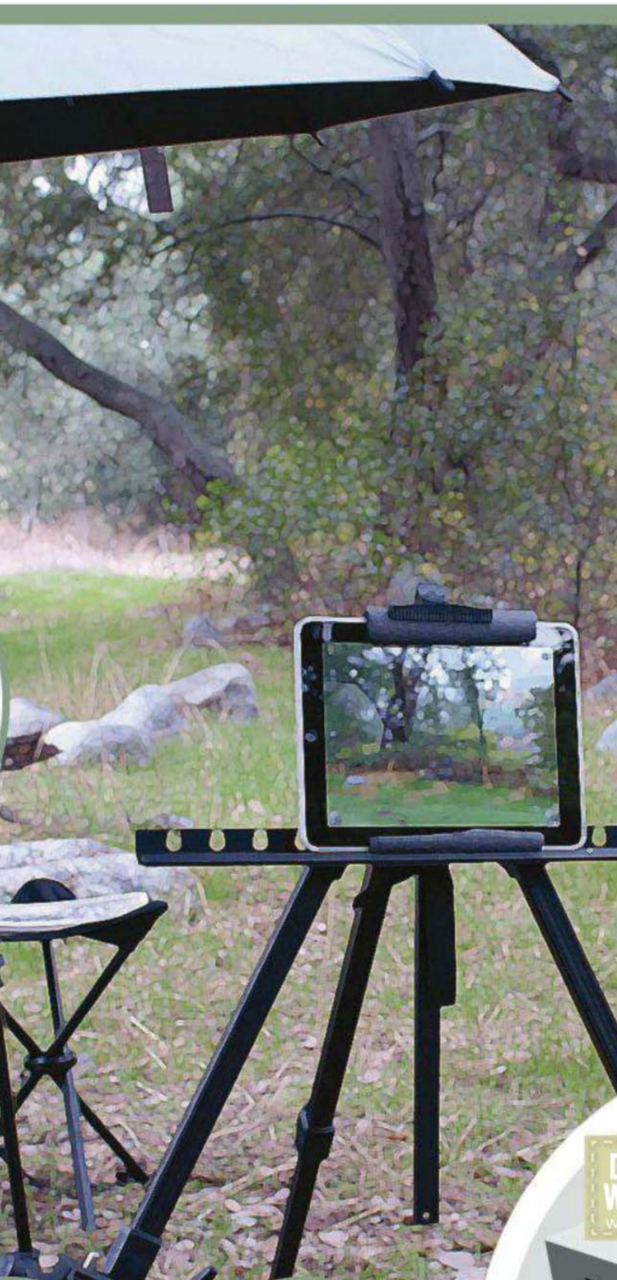


BAMBOO SET-UP
Patrick Faulwetter likes to use a Wacom Bamboo and laptop to work from when painting outside. The Wacom's hotkeys prove invaluable.

THE OUTDOOR ARTIST'S KIT BAG

DIGITAL PLEIN AIR SETUP

Here are the bits and pieces you'll need to make painting digitally outdoors that little bit easier…



Roth Ruppel captured his plein air setup for us.

BACKPACK

A medium backpack is usually large enough to carry a laptop and an Intuos.

GOLF UMBRELLA

This size of brolly is good because it blocks the light and can be adjusted. Ensure it has a rubber grip so it can be held by a nano clamp.

iPAD/SAMSUNG GALAXY

You can avoid much of the gear here by using a tablet computer, such as the iPad. Although the software is limited compared to Photoshop, apps such as ArtRage, SketchBook Pro and Adobe Photoshop Touch help offer a good platform.

CAMERA TRIPOD

Shaddy recommends the Velbon CX 570 tripod, but any stable but lightweight SLR camera tripod would do the job.

ENERGIZER XP18000

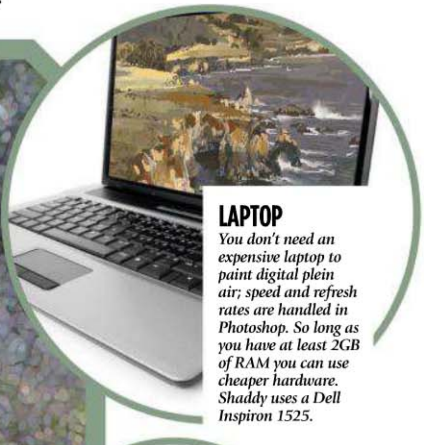
Battery life is the bane of the digital artist escaping the desk. This very handy gadget will add between three and four hours to your battery life.

NANO CLAMP

Pack one of these to securely connect your umbrella to the tripod.

YOU

All the technology, gadgets and nano clamps in the world can't make you a great artist. Study other artists' work, paint with friends and enjoy the challenge.



LAPTOP

You don't need an expensive laptop to paint digital plein air; speed and refresh rates are handled in Photoshop. So long as you have at least 2GB of RAM you can use cheaper hardware. Shaddy uses a Dell Inspiron 1525.

TWO CAMPING STOOLS

Pack a pair of collapsible camping stools – one for your laptop and the other for you to sit on.

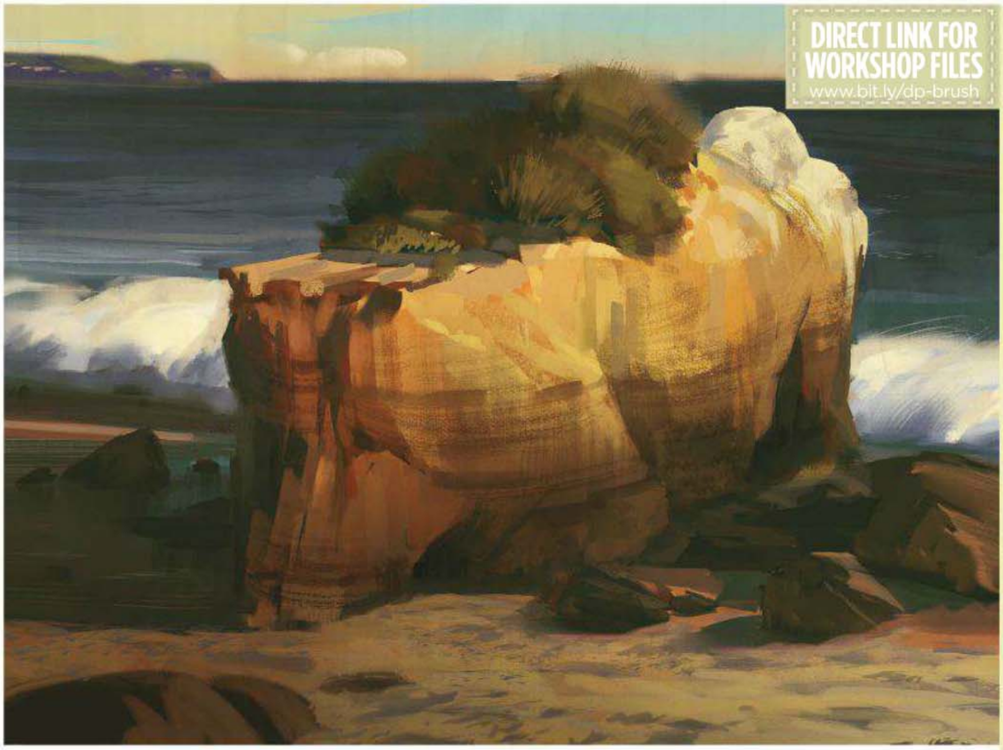
WACOM INTUOS

Wacom's tablet is the best on the shelf, and a little sturdier for plein air painting than the cheaper Bamboo. You'll want the hotkeys, so opt for the Intuos3, 4 or 5.

SHADE BOX

You'll have to build this yourself (see the template on this issue's disc). It's an essential piece of kit, to stave off screen glare and ensure your colours are accurate.

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/shadebox



DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/dp-brush

EL MATADOR, MALIBU

"If I'm painting a rock, I'll try to paint the rock at an angle where strong light and shadow are apparent," explains Nick Gindraux.

➜ polished level, the act of plein air painting has the opposite effect. "It's fascinating to see roughness instead of definition in pixels," says Patrick, who now looks to paintings that define space, light and mood with limited brushstrokes.

"There can be a freshness to mark-making and colour in digital painting that surpasses traditional in some ways," says Shaddy. "Technology doesn't change art that much because the human eye just wants beauty."

While the technology enables artists to customise tools to form expression in a unique, fast and emotional way, artistic vision is needed to edit out what's in front of the painter. Digital plein air painting is a new art form that enables artists to push shapes for artistic effect.

"When we're out there we're observing and replicating colour, colour relativity, lighting scenarios, atmosphere and texture," says Eytan Zana, a member of the Digital Plein Air Society. "Most importantly we're stylising, exaggerating and organising what nature has given us into a compelling composition."

Just as technology is enabling digital artists to connect with traditional, observational painting, traditional artists are connecting with the technology. David Hockney, one of England's greatest modern artists, has adopted the iPad into his workflow. He carries the tablet with him and paints daily on the device. He stylises and paints symbolically, combining his digital and studio painting to find the 'bigger picture' in traditional landscape painting.

Likewise, digital artists are finding the excursions away from the studio are reaping rewards. While Patrick has found "painting architecture completes the loop to my concept art and design background," Shaddy expresses a similar desire to link all facets of his art. "I don't want to be that artist who does their day job, all the while thinking there's this other work he really wants to do. I want it all to be connected."

This linkage between artistic vision and technology is at the heart of plein air. Those digital artists that take their tools outside are relearning to observe the world, to paint light and shadow in exciting ways, to interpret colour, to edit and exaggerate and establish new puritan processes that eventually seep into their imaginative art.

"The more people take up this style, the more chances there will be for the creation of masterpiece-quality work. There'll be a great artistic evolution coming in the future with this technique," says Nick, who looks forward to a time when digital art is hung in galleries and cherished by collectors. The journey begins at your front door. ●

> **"It teaches me the pure process of painting. It's just about observing and putting down colours"**

ARTIST TIP

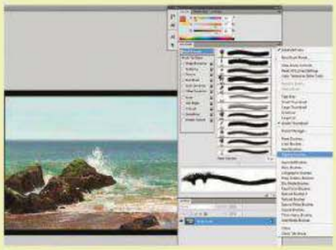
MAKE MISTAKES

"Develop a process and a routine that works for you. But get out there. Your process will evolve from the doing, so get out there and make mistakes – they are your best teachers."
Robh Ruppel

BRUSHES

STROKE OF GENIUS

Plein air artist Shaddy Safadi shares his favourite brushes and offers tech tips



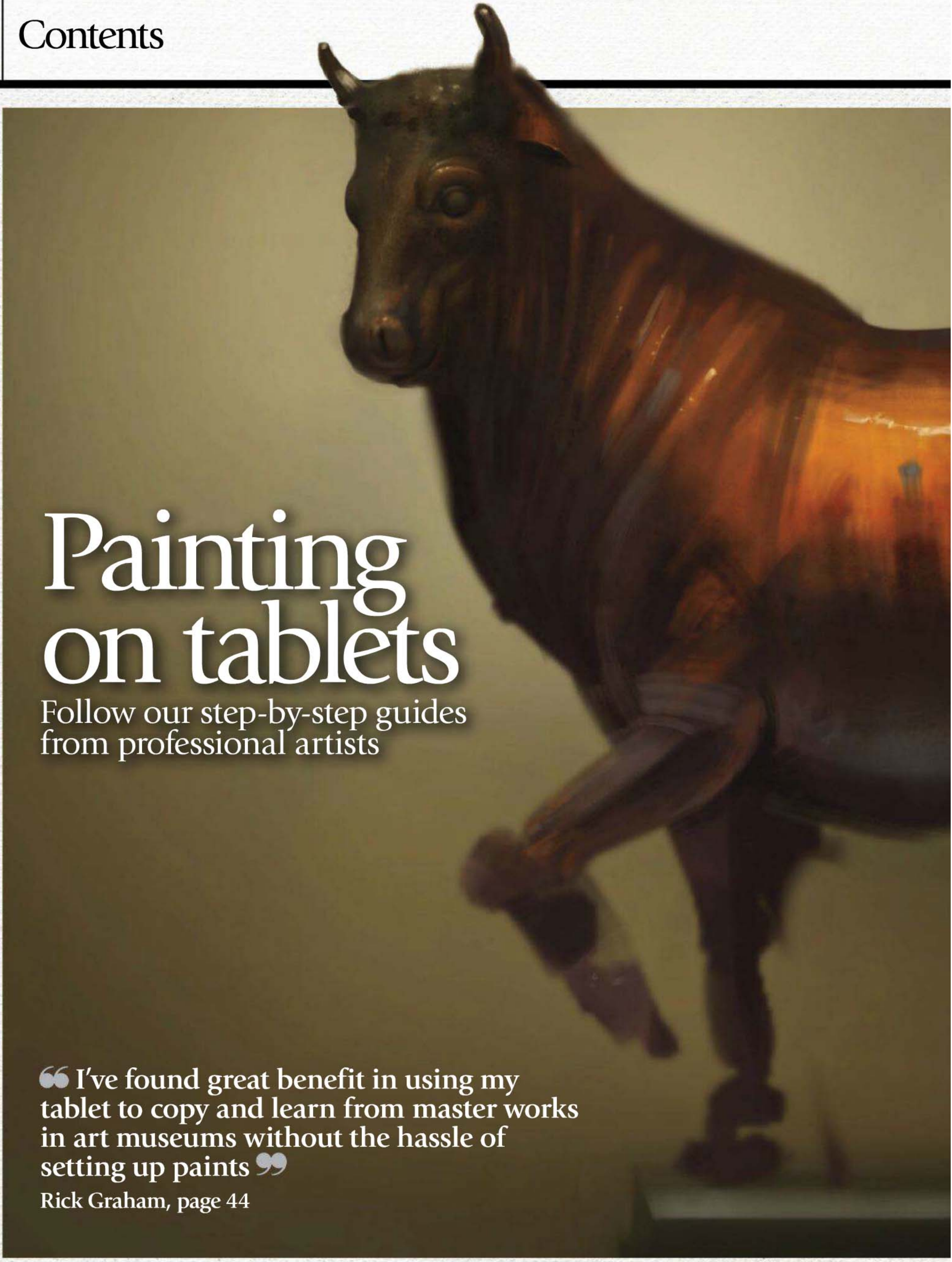
Shaddy relies on some key brushes for his plein air painting, because a good tool and brush can aid your painting subconsciously. The more you're dragged out of the painting, because of poor refresh rates or mark making, the worse your art will be. "Good brushes enable your subconscious to freely make marks without fighting the implement," explains Shaddy. "Photoshop brushes out of the box are stilted and clumsy, so your painting is likely to be stilted and clumsy."

The brushes Shaddy uses have been "90 per cent stolen" from artists like Jaime Jones, says Shaddy, then tweaked over the years to suit. Designed to be used specifically for plein air painting, these are multi-purpose brushes "that feel like many of the natural elements you'll come across while painting without being cutout stamps of them," he says.

Shaddy's plein air brushes can be found by clicking the lin above. To install in Photoshop go to Window>Brushes>Load Brushes.

Some plein air brush tips from Shaddy:

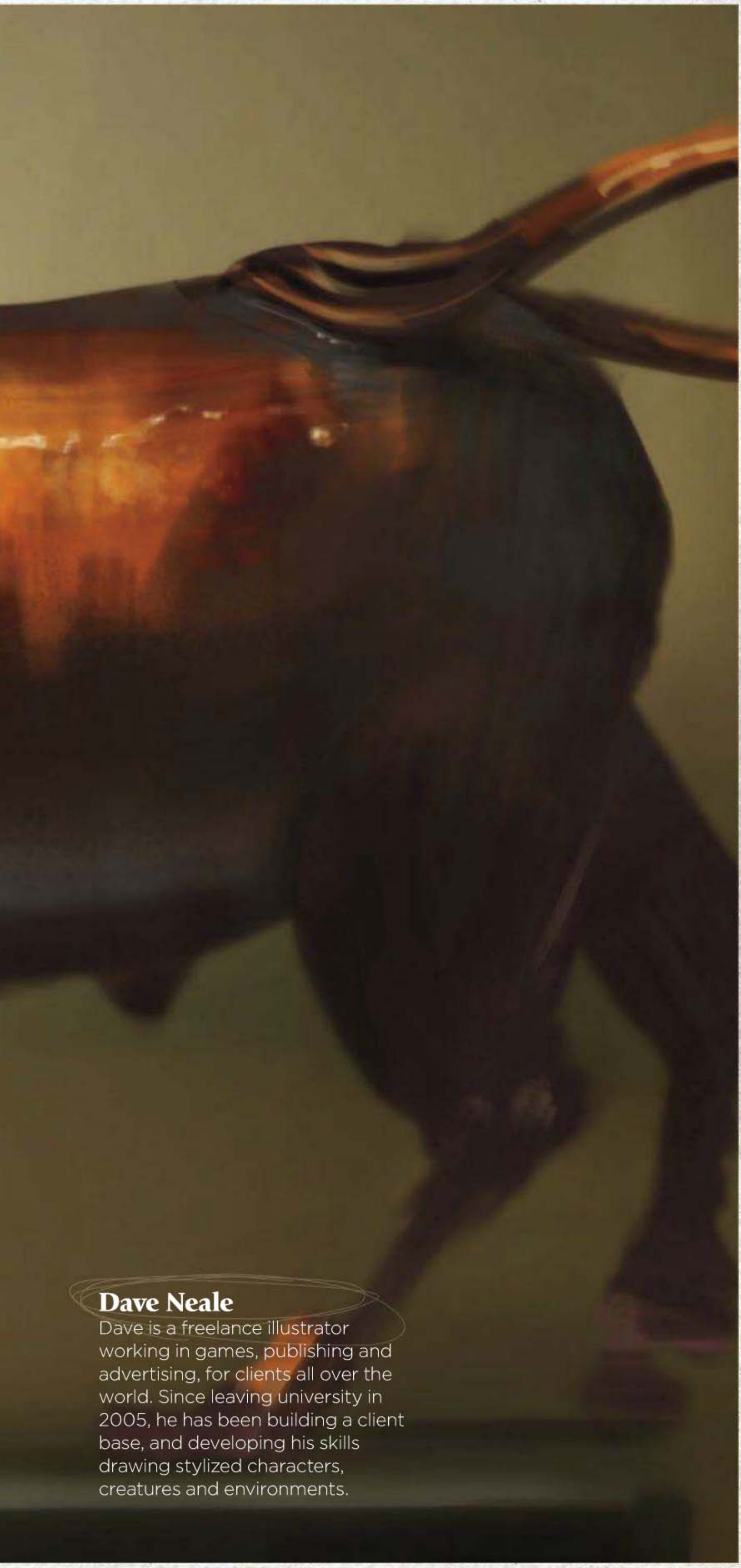
- Work no bigger than 3,000 pixels wide, so that a complex 600 pixel wide brush can refresh immediately and smoothly.
- Turn off Open GL in preferences and restart Photoshop. This makes your laptop faster (you won't miss Zoom and Drop Shadow).
- Older, slower laptops are fine – brush refresh in Photoshop is all that matters.



Painting on tablets

Follow our step-by-step guides from professional artists

> “I’ve found great benefit in using my tablet to copy and learn from master works in art museums without the hassle of setting up paints”
>
> **Rick Graham, page 44**



Dave Neale
Dave is a freelance illustrator working in games, publishing and advertising, for clients all over the world. Since leaving university in 2005, he has been building a client base, and developing his skills drawing stylized characters, creatures and environments.

WORKSHOPS

Eight practical guides to mastering digital painting on your tablet

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How comic book techniques can be applied to digital tablet painting

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Capture a live figure session using ArtRage on the iPad

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Step outside with your tablet and paint the sunlit world digitally

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Learn how to draw from life using the Samsung Note 10.1

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How to capture the poetic beauty of a cityscape in overcast light

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How creative use of an iPad in a museum can feed your imagination

Use basic life drawing and painting concepts to inform your digital art – page 60

Made on iPad

Procreate

MASTER BLACK AND WHITE SKETCHING

Karlsimon visits Highgate Cemetery to show how comic book techniques can be applied to digital tablet painting

All sorts of things give me inspiration, be it books, films, photojournalism or other artists' works. But most inspiring are the things that I see around me in my daily life. Great compositions and subjects are everywhere, not to mention the moods and light that the weather and seasons bring!

One of my favourite places for sketching is Highgate Cemetery in London. No matter where you turn you see something that wants to be drawn. For this tutorial, I've settled for a simple view of some graves lined up against a backdrop of dark trees covered in vines.

I'm planning to make a contrast, drawing using techniques similar to the ones I apply when tackling this type of subject in traditional media. When I do a study on paper, I tend to split the work into three stages: drawing, inking and colouring. This works just as well for digital mediums but since this image is to be black and white, I won't be using any colour. The last step is simply done in shades of grey instead. Let's start drawing!

Artist **PROFILE**

Karlsimon

COUNTRY: UK

Karlsimon is a concept artist experienced in the film and games industries and currently working for Double Negative. His projects include Les Miserables and Total Recall.

www.karlsimon.com

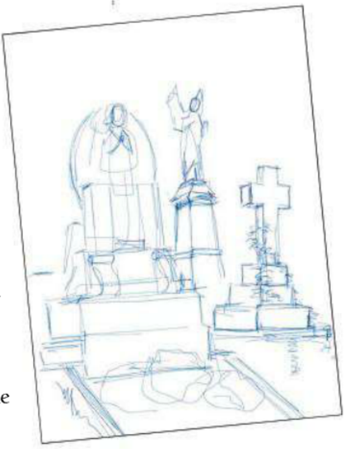
DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/dp-bw

1 Finding a view

I look for a composition, trying to find a spot where the subject of my painting looks interesting. I consider the position of the sun, how much of my subject is in light/shadow, and so on. I decide to sit in a spot where the angel statue of the grave closest to me has a dark mass of green behind it. This will be the main focus of the image and the light angel against the dark backdrop should make for a nice graphic read.

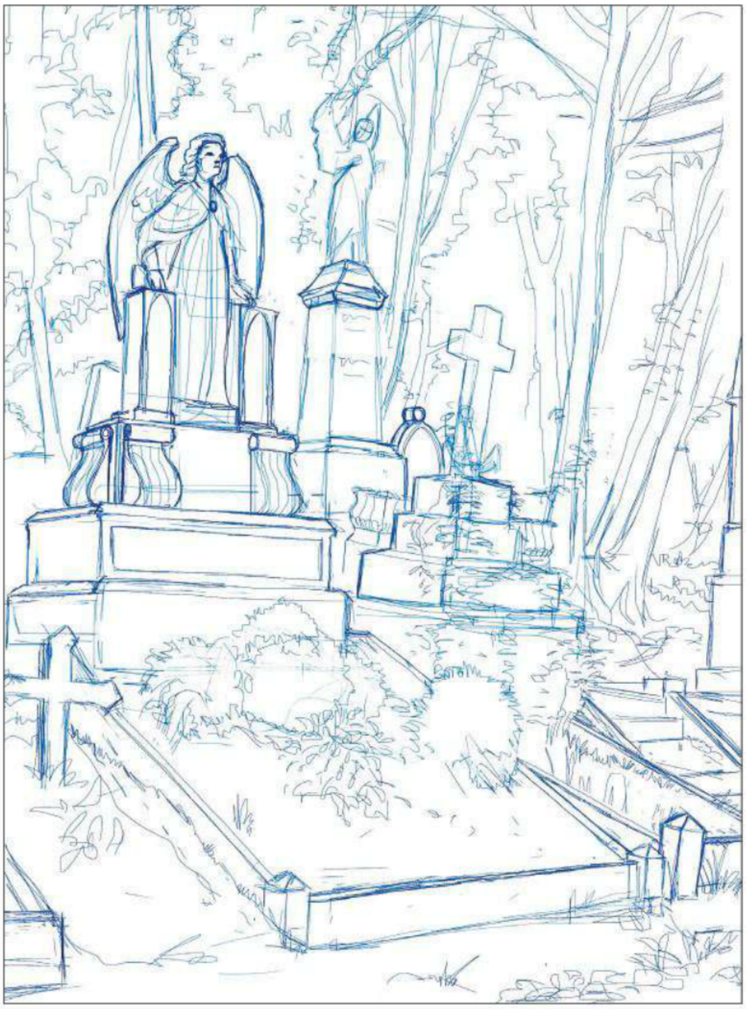
2 Blue lines

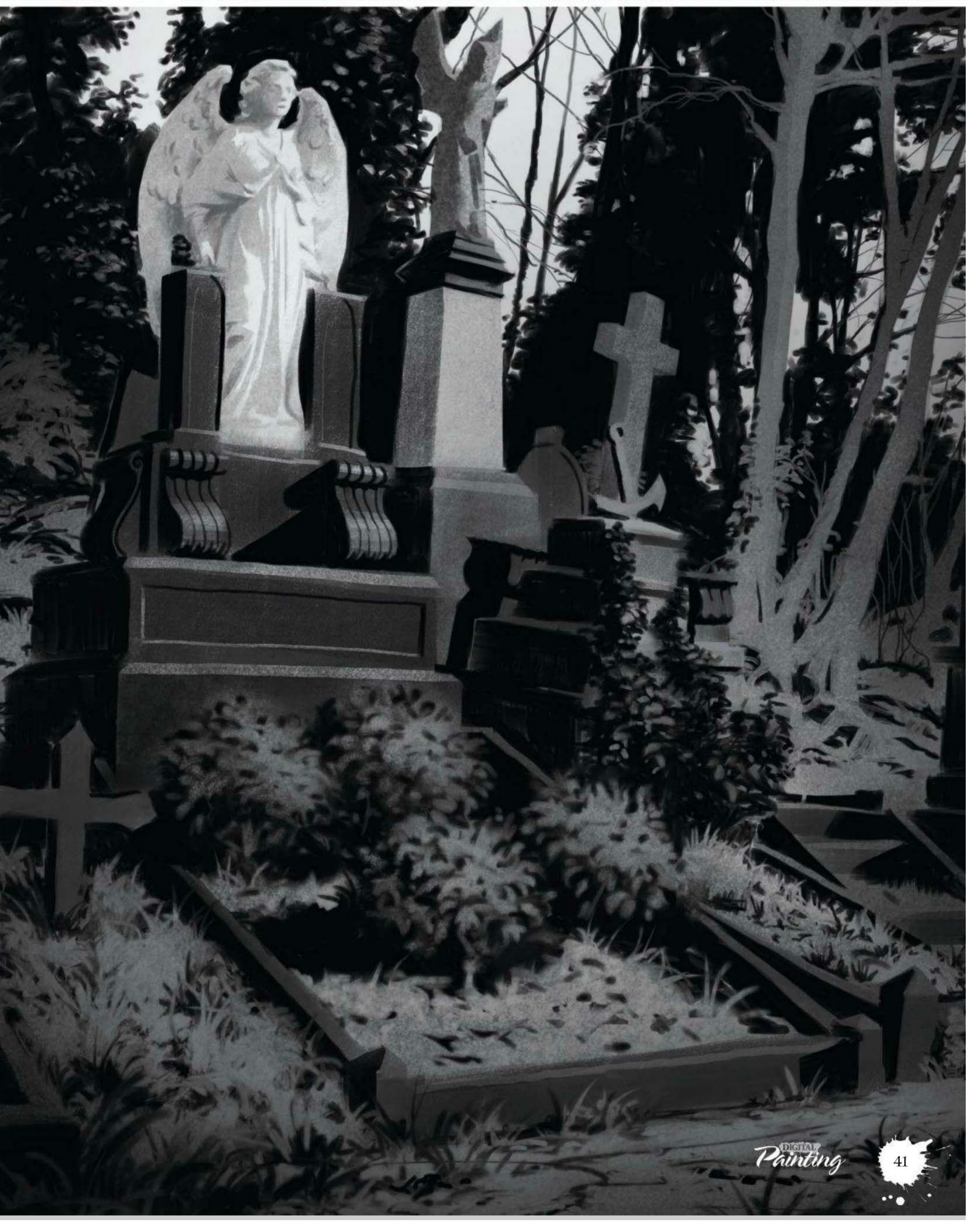
I've decided to go for a traditional approach here, so I start off with a line drawing. Making sure I measure things carefully, I sketch in blue line (it will help later) on white background. Drawing on a tablet is quite fiddly compared to pencil on paper and the resulting line work is not exactly beautiful, but the important thing here is that the perspective and the relative scale of things is correct.



3 Adjusting the composition

Despite looking carefully for the right framing when I started, I feel the composition is not right. I scale the whole image down, allowing for more of the ground plane to show at the bottom of the image. This adds depth and leads the eye into the picture. I also divert from reality a bit by scaling down the cross on the right and by moving the small angel in the middle up. After some additional perspective adjustments I'm happy with the drawing.





4 Preparing for ink

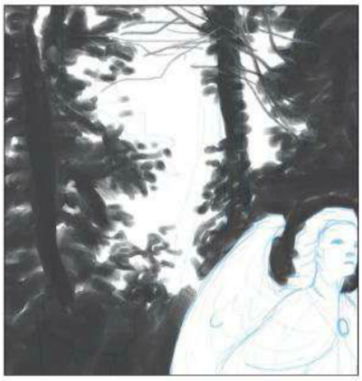
I set the drawing layer to multiply and create a new layer underneath. This will be my 'inking' layer. On this layer I will work only with pure black and pure white, but to see the line work on top of the black, I reduce the opacity of the layer to about 75 per cent. I'm careful not to colour pick after doing this, as I would be picking grey rather than pure black.

5 Binary painting

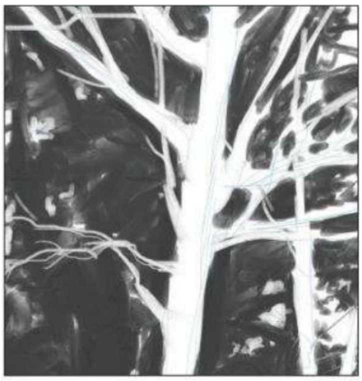
The blue line makes it easier to see the drawing against the dark ink. I'm using Procreate's default Wet Round and Wet Square brushes. Any grey values come from the smudging of the brushes. In my mind I'm thinking of only black and white. The trick here is to make the image work with only these two values.

6 Design what you see

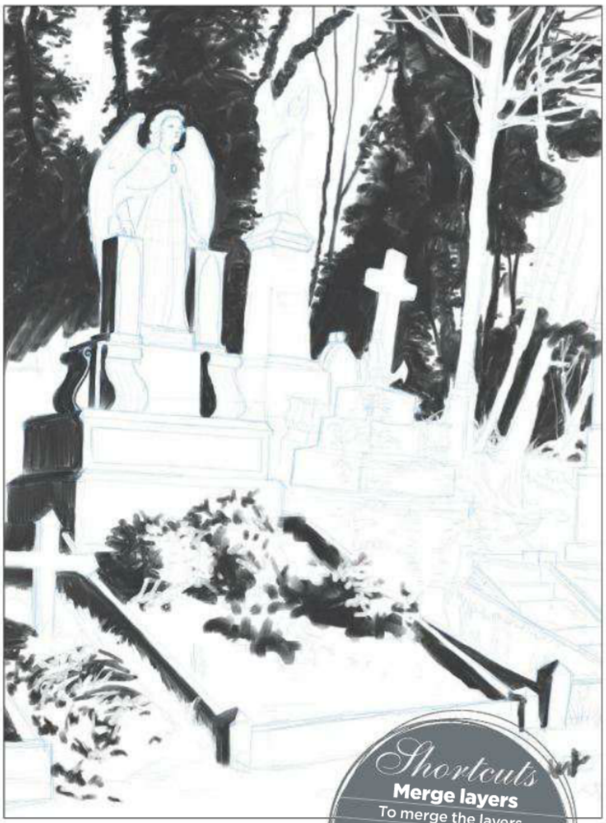
I observe the scene in front of me and start to plan out what shapes to paint black and what to leave white. This is where your design sense comes in. Plan carefully as the two options available are black shapes on a white background or vice versa. In some places I put a black shape next to a black shape, losing the edge, and sometimes white against white.



Dark trees against a light background



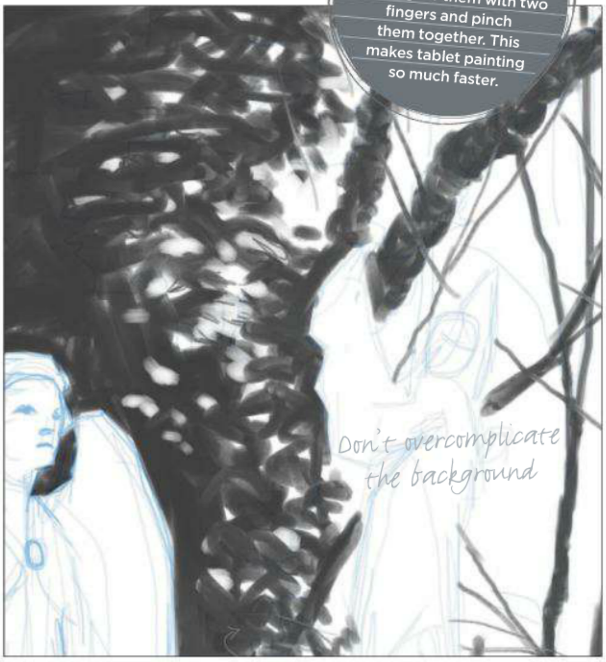
Light trees against a dark background



Shortcuts

Merge layers

To merge the layers, simply grab them with two fingers and pinch them together. This makes tablet painting so much faster.



Don't overcomplicate the background

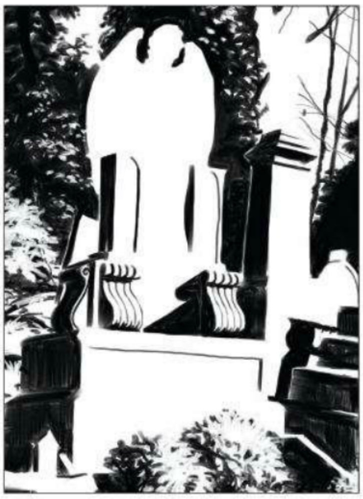
PRO SECRETS

Take your time

The initial drawing might look like a small part of the work, but it takes me nearly two hours. Take your time, the drawing is the most important part of any painting.

7 Simplify the background

The foliage behind the graves serves as a nice backdrop. Despite the fact that I can see a lot of different values in there I decide to make it into an almost solid black shape. In a few places I paint in some white patches describing a few leaves. If I had been doing this in real ink, I would have had to draw these leaves and then carefully paint around them.

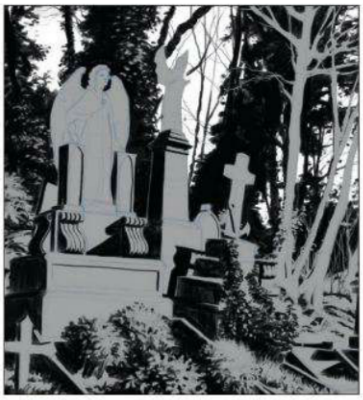


8 Silhouette or form?

I work around the image, designing the black and white shapes that I feel best describe the form. For the background, the shapes are simply silhouettes, whereas in the foreground, the shapes show which side of an object is lit and which is in shadow. The only thing I leave out is the leftmost angel. I want this to pop out so I plan to give it a lighter shadow value later.

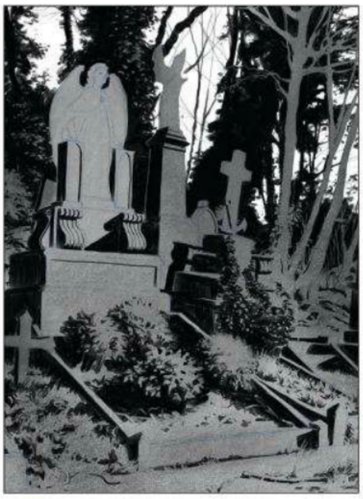
9 Simplification is key

Even when I paint from life, I like to sometimes simplify and stylise the values of the image. By putting the contrast where I want it, I can lead the viewer's attention to, or away from, something. So at this stage I think it's okay to move away even further from trying to copy reality exactly, and shift more towards a design that I think will work well for the mood I want to create.



10 Separate the sky out

For now I'm leaving the sky completely white and everything else a darker value. I make a new layer underneath the ink and fill this with a medium grey. On top of this, I make a new layer for the sky. I go around with a solid brush (no transparency) and mask in the sky with white paint. Now I'm free to paint anything underneath without running the risk of staining the white sky.

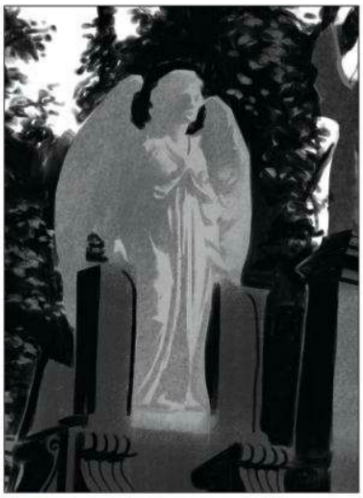


11 Low contrast washes

Using a slightly textured, big oversized brush, I start laying down some values. I don't go into any detail, only big gradient washes of paint. I want the trees and the vertical planes of the graves to be slightly darker, and the ground/horizontal plane to be slightly brighter. Watching my value range, I make sure I don't use too much contrast, only subtle shades of grey.

12 Local value differences

Not all the things in front of me are made of the same material, so after I'm happy with the initial value washes, I go in with a medium sized brush and bring out the local values of the different elements.



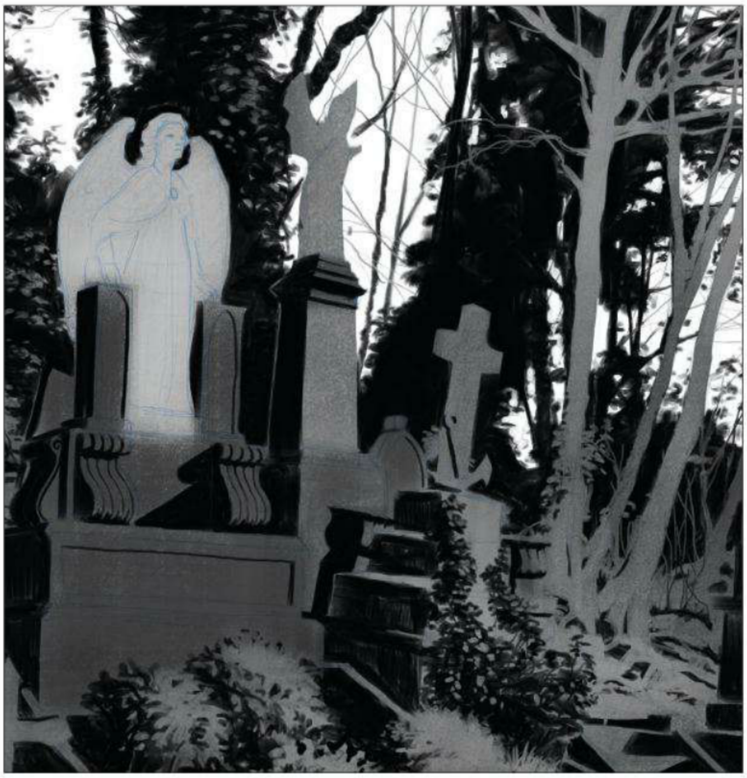
13 Going back to the focal point

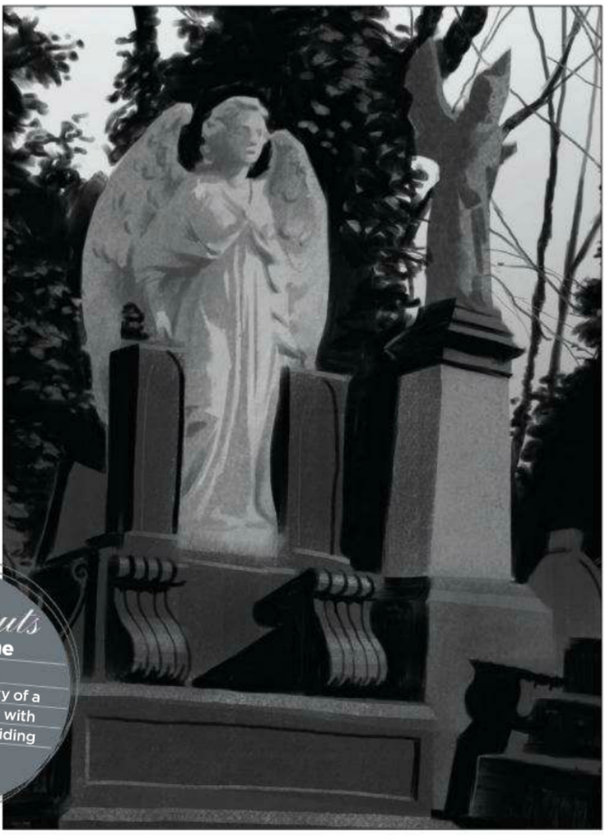
Now is the time to go back and ink the angels as I want to make sure that they 'pop' just enough from the background. On a new layer, I start working with the Wet Round brush to describe the form of the angels. I don't want the shadow side to blend in to the background, so instead of black I use a medium grey. Once I'm happy that the shapes are looking okay, I lock the alpha pixels of the layer and then give it a bit of texture using the same brush that I used for the value washes.

Shortcuts

Change the opacity

Change the opacity of a layer by tapping it with two fingers then sliding left and right.



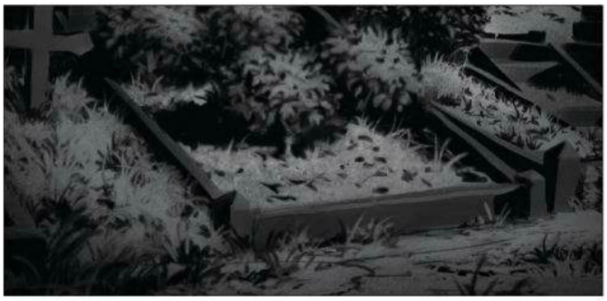


14 Materials

At this stage the image is starting to feel coherent so I decide to put down some details, making more accurate material descriptions. I like the contrast between the light, matte angel and the dark, shiny gravestone, so I play that up by putting some highlights on the dark material. I also decide to give the angel a third value, it being the main focus of the image. After that I jump around all over the image darkening and lightening areas as I see fit to make it work better.

15 Finishing up

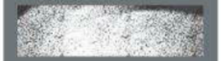
I'm not quite happy with the foreground, especially the foliage, so I go back to the ink layer and re-work some areas. The white sky looks a little bit too strong so I knock it back with a subtle gradient. After that it's time to go home and load the image into Photoshop for some final contrast adjustments and then we're done! ●



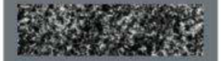
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSHES



This is the big brush I used for the shading. It's a simple square shape with a grainy texture.



This is the texture used in the shading brush.

Wet Round Brush

I like this default brush for the inking stage. Try playing around with the wetness parameter.

Made on iPad

ArtRage

PAINT A FIGURE FROM LIFE

Artist **Rick Graham** demonstrates capturing a live figure session with the iPad's most painterly app

Long have I admired the work of virtuoso paintbrush handlers such as John Singer Sargent, Joaquin Sorella, Frans Hals, and Anders Zorn. The immediacy of their alla prima method emphasises the abstract quality of the strokes, creating works that appear fresh, direct, and unlaboured. In my own work I pursue this looser style of wet into wet painting using both oils and slow drying acrylics.

It was only natural then, that the iPad app that best suited my own style of painting was ArtRage. While there are several excellent iPad painting apps available, each with its unique advantages, none do the job of mimicking the viscosity of wet oil paint in the same way as ArtRage. From thin glazes to thick impasto, ArtRage duplicates brilliantly the look and behaviour of real paint. It is a joy to use a digital program that connects me so seamlessly to my own way of working in the studio.

For me, the iPad is a portable paint box that allows me to capture quick colour studies that can later be used as reference material for studio paintings. Using the iPad, I'm able to paint at times and in places difficult or forbidden for traditional paints, such as airports, night scenes or pubs. Any situation where fleeting light permits only minutes to capture its essence, such as a sunset or gathering storm, is now accessible with the iPad. In addition, I've found great benefit in using my tablet to copy and learn from master works in art museums without the hassle of setting up paints.

Artist
PROFILE

Rick Graham

COUNTRY: US

A professional illustrator, animator and art teacher Rick has a permanent exhibition at Springville Art Museum.

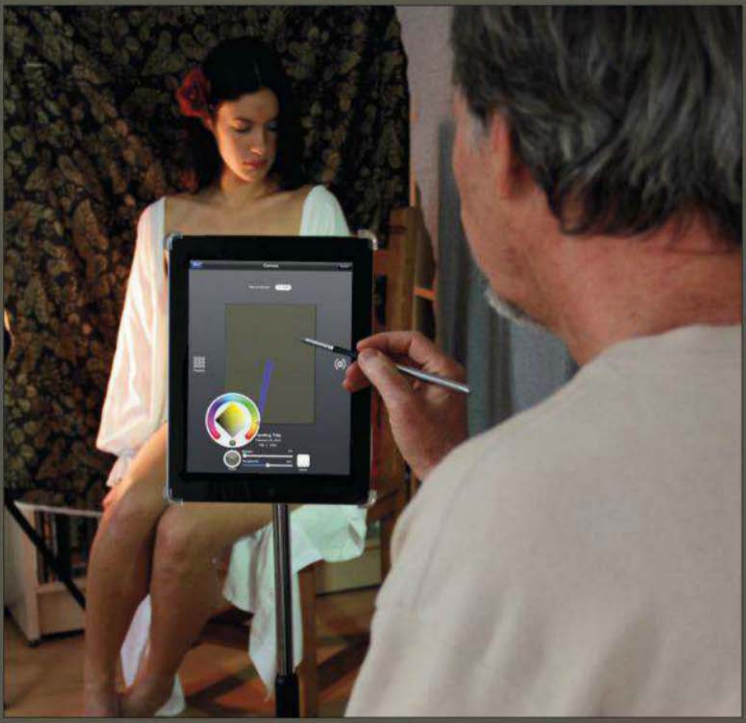
www.bit.ly/rgraham

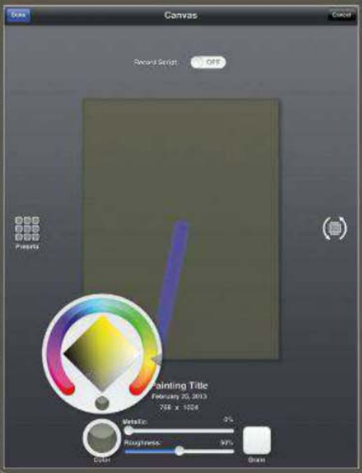
DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES

www.bit.ly/dp-artrage

1 Mounting the iPad

Whenever I can, I prefer to mount my iPad on an easel for hands free use. Pictured is the GigEasy iPad Mount with 360 degree rotation, allowing a horizontal or vertical orientation. It also leaves the dock connector exposed so you can charge or connect the iPad. However, most portable easels work well and are less expensive.





Record Script OFF

Metallic 0%

Roughness 93%

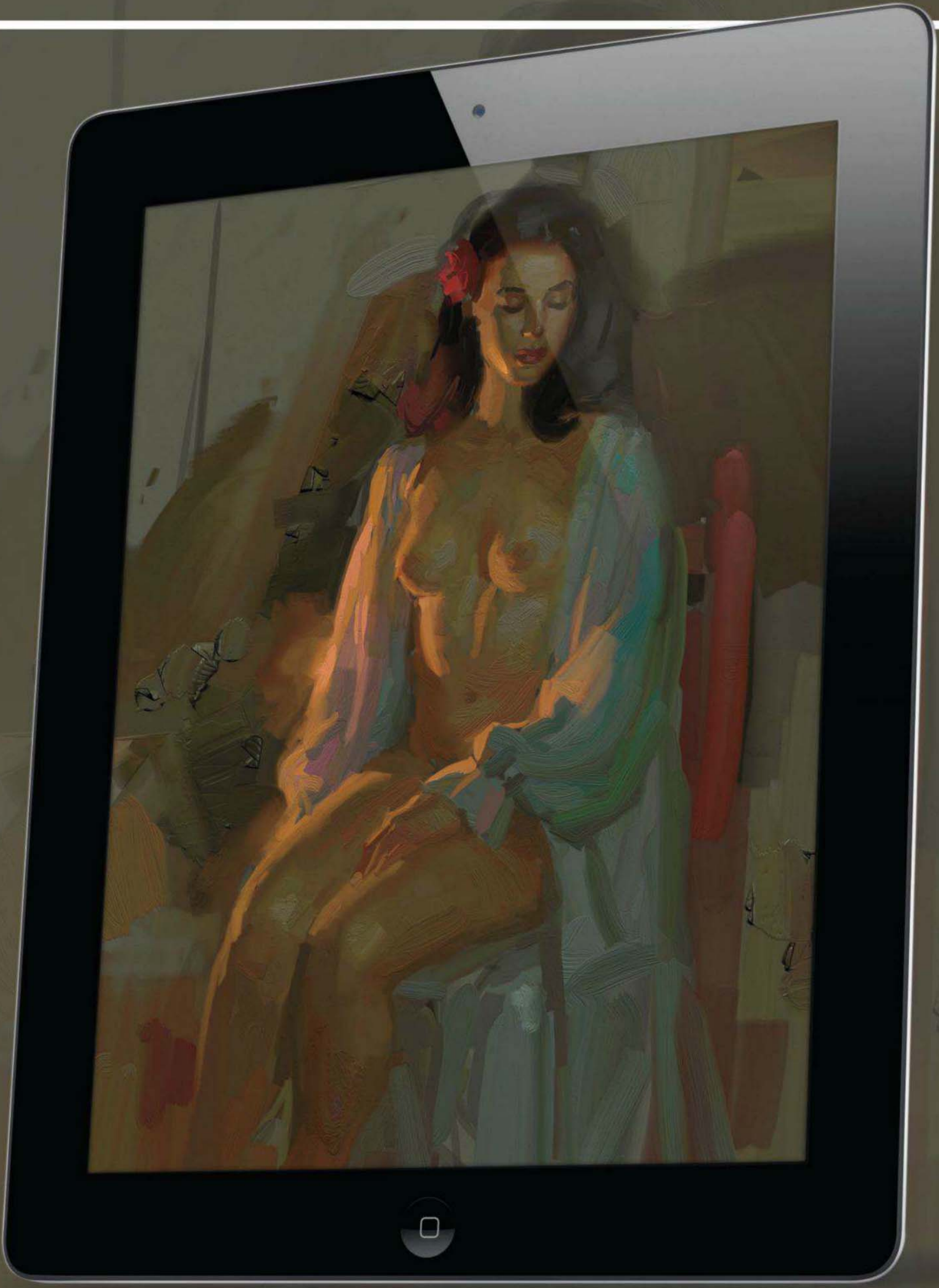
2 Selecting the surface to paint on

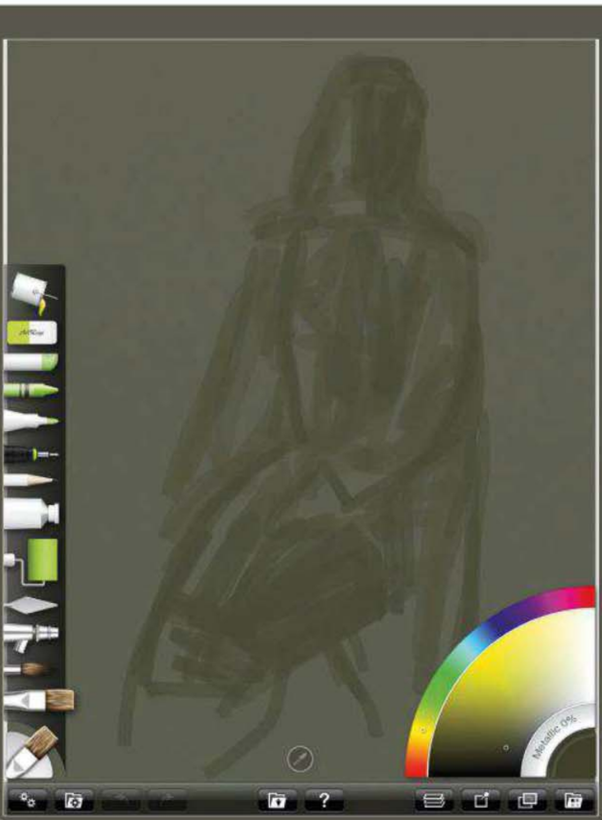
Once I've selected 'New Painting' in the gallery page, several options for painting surfaces will appear. Tapping Color brings up the Color menu and allows me to select any colour I wish as a base tone for my canvas. Finally, Tapping Grain allows me to pick from a selection of canvas textures. For this painting I'm choosing Fine Canvas with vertical rather than horizontal orientation (middle right icon). So now I'm ready to start painting. Clicking on the canvas will take me into the program.

PRO SECRETS

A painter's stylus

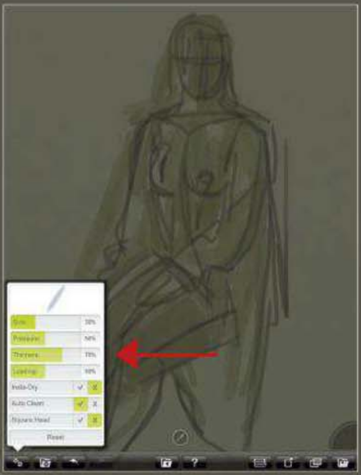
My stylus of choice is the Sensu Brush. Its conductive hairs glide easily across the iPad's screen, and because it is an actual brush, it helps replicate the experience of real painting.





3 Beginning to paint

On the left side is a list of tool options called a Tool Pod. Being the oil painter that I am, I choose the Oil Brush tool and begin to do a loose block in of the figure. This is a very rough indication of the size and placement of the figure without concern for detail. At this stage I use a broad sized brush. Brush sizes can easily be changed with a three-finger slide up and down the screen.



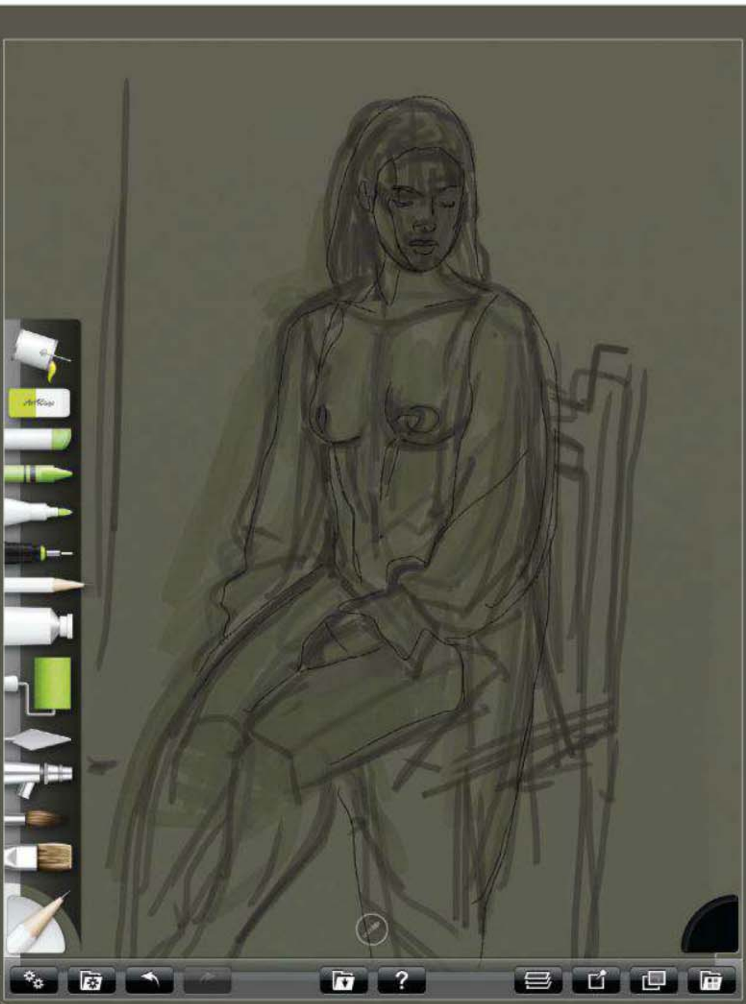
4 Starting to refine the drawing

With a smaller brush and a slightly darker colour, I make a second pass over the loose sketch to start refining the shapes. Each of the tools contains a menu of options. From the Oil Brush tool menu, I'm choosing to keep my paints thinned down at this stage. It's similar to my studio painting process where I thin down oils using mineral spirits during the early block-in stage.

PRO SECRETS

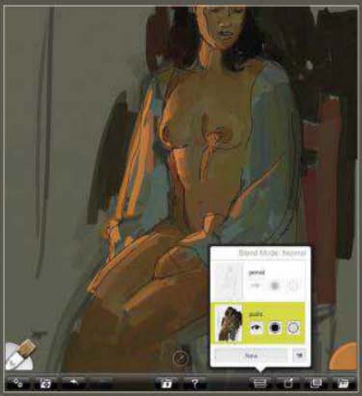
Manage your edges

Good paintings require good edge management. Use variation in how hard or soft the edges are as shapes meet one another. This will not only add variety to the work but can also be a means for directing the eye. The ArtRage tool Pallet Knife offers several effective ways for blending your strokes and managing your edges.



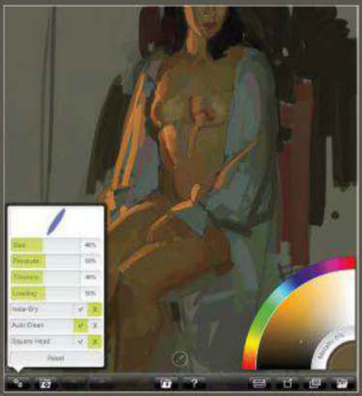
5 A further refined pencil sketch

I'll now make a third pass over the drawing with an even more refined line using the Pencil tool. (Notice the selected tool appears in the lower left pod). I make this pencil sketch on a separate layer so that when I'm ready to apply colour I can do so under this layer, preserving the line. This way I can paint loose and free without fear of losing the drawing. It's a great digital advantage I only wish I could do with real oils!



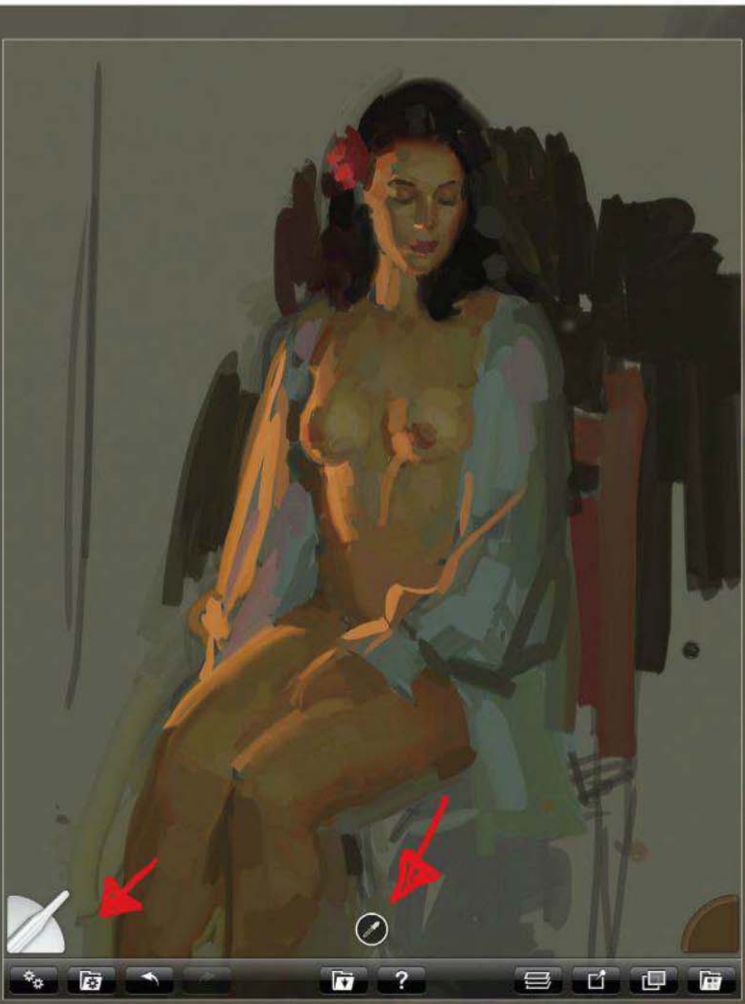
6 Adding colour

As you can see in the Layer menu, a loose block-in of colour is being applied under the pencil sketch. My first task is to set the stage for my value relationships by painting in darkest darks and lightest lights first. This allows me to better gauge the middle tones which can be tricky without these value comparisons.



7 Less thinner

I gradually reduce the amount of thinner and apply thicker paint. Like the 'fat over lean' oil painting advice, this makes wet in wet painting easier and adds variety to the paint strokes. I reduce the opacity of the pencil layer so the paint is more dominant. I can bring this back if I need to revisit the drawing.

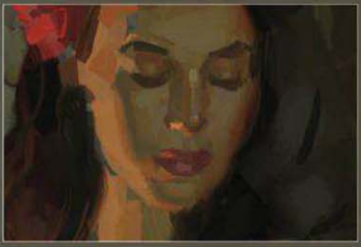


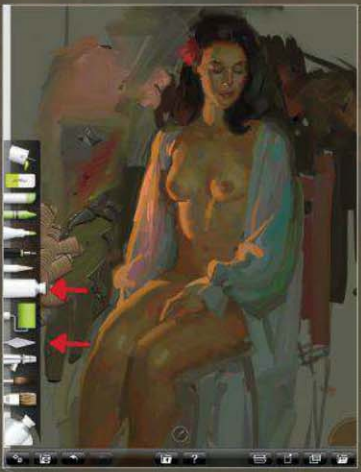
8 Colour picking

As more colours are applied to the painting I find less need to create new ones from the Color Pod and instead, pick them off the painting using the Sample Toggle located bottom middle. When this icon is tapped, the Sample Toggle image will appear in the Tool Pod. This lets you know you are ready to select a colour from the canvas to use for your next stroke. A real time saver.

9 Zoom in, zoom out

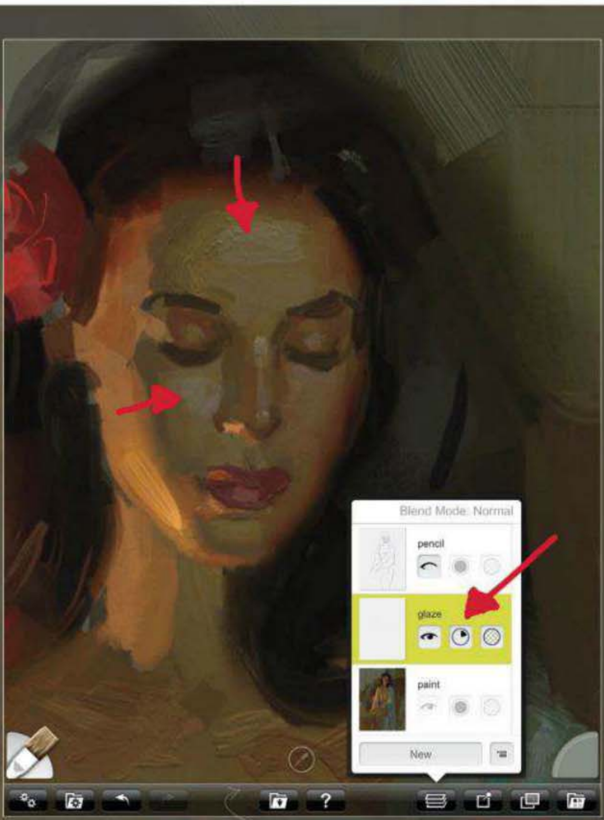
Two fingers dragged apart bring the head close up for some refinement work. I try to retain the freshness of the alla prima brushwork by avoiding too much detail or smoothing out too many strokes. A single tap of two fingers takes the image back to original size so I can see how my refinements fit with the whole painting.





10 Using the Paint Tube and Pallet Knife

I now start tossing in some abstract background colour. The Paint Tube tool is a fun way to squirt down thick paint which can then be blended and smeared with the Pallet Knife. The Pallet Knife contains a number of menu options, my favourite being Hard Out Smudge and Just Blend Colour. The Paint Roller, located just below the Paint Tube, is another pleasing way to apply and spread colour.



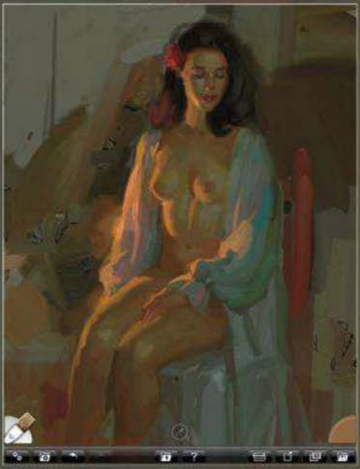
PRO SECRETS

Step back

Studio painters know the importance of getting a fresh look at the work in progress by stepping back to make sure detail work contributes to the look of the whole. Without this view from a distance you run the risk of adding detail that isn't helpful, and may hurt the overall look of the work. With iPad painting, if I've zoomed in on one area to refine it I'll soon zoom back out to make sure I'm keeping the big relationships in mind and not overworking it.

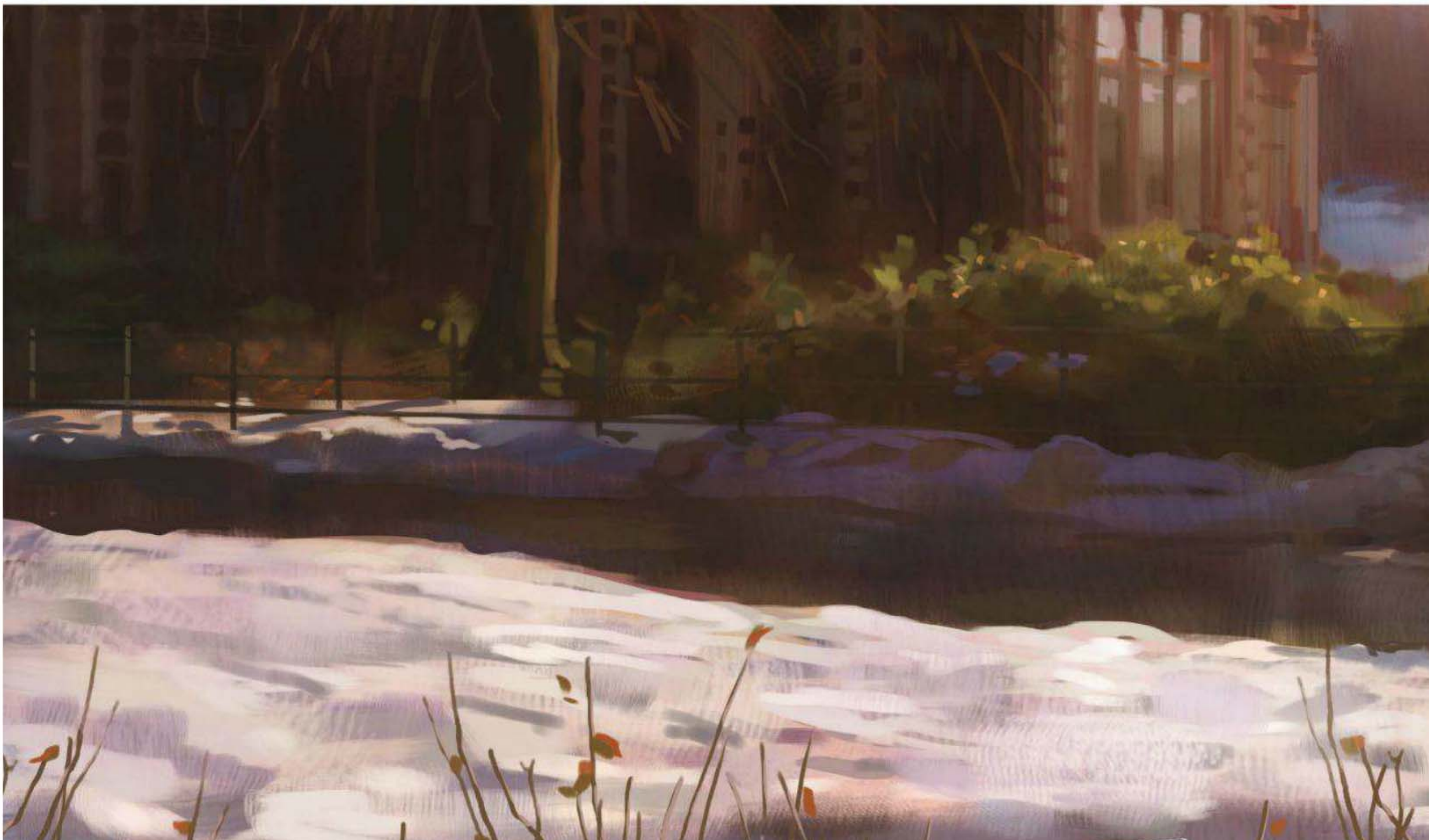
11 Glazing

I'm now going to apply a thin glaze (transparent colour wash) on the face where I want to slightly lighten and cool the forehead and cheek. I do this by creating a new layer where I can adjust the transparency by spinning the circle you see next to the red arrow in the Layer Menu. This allows me more control over the amount of transparency I'm giving to the glaze.



12 Final touches

The Oil Brush thinner is set quite low now as I apply mostly thick paint to finish up. A variety of thick and thin paint, along with a good mix of hard and soft edges, will add interest to the painting. I can add some atmosphere to the light on her right sleeve by smearing some of its colour into the background. The session on the iPad is finished and I now have a colour study which I can use in my studio as reference for an oil painting.



Made on Asus EP121

Photoshop

PAINT A PLEIN AIR LANDSCAPE

Olly Lawson shows how using digital tools and techniques he brings traditional plein air painting into a new era

Artist
PROFILE

Olly Lawson

COUNTRY: England

Olly is a freelance illustrator and has been working at Atomhawk Design on titles from Warner Bros, Sony and Microsoft.

www.ollylawson.co.uk

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/dp-plein

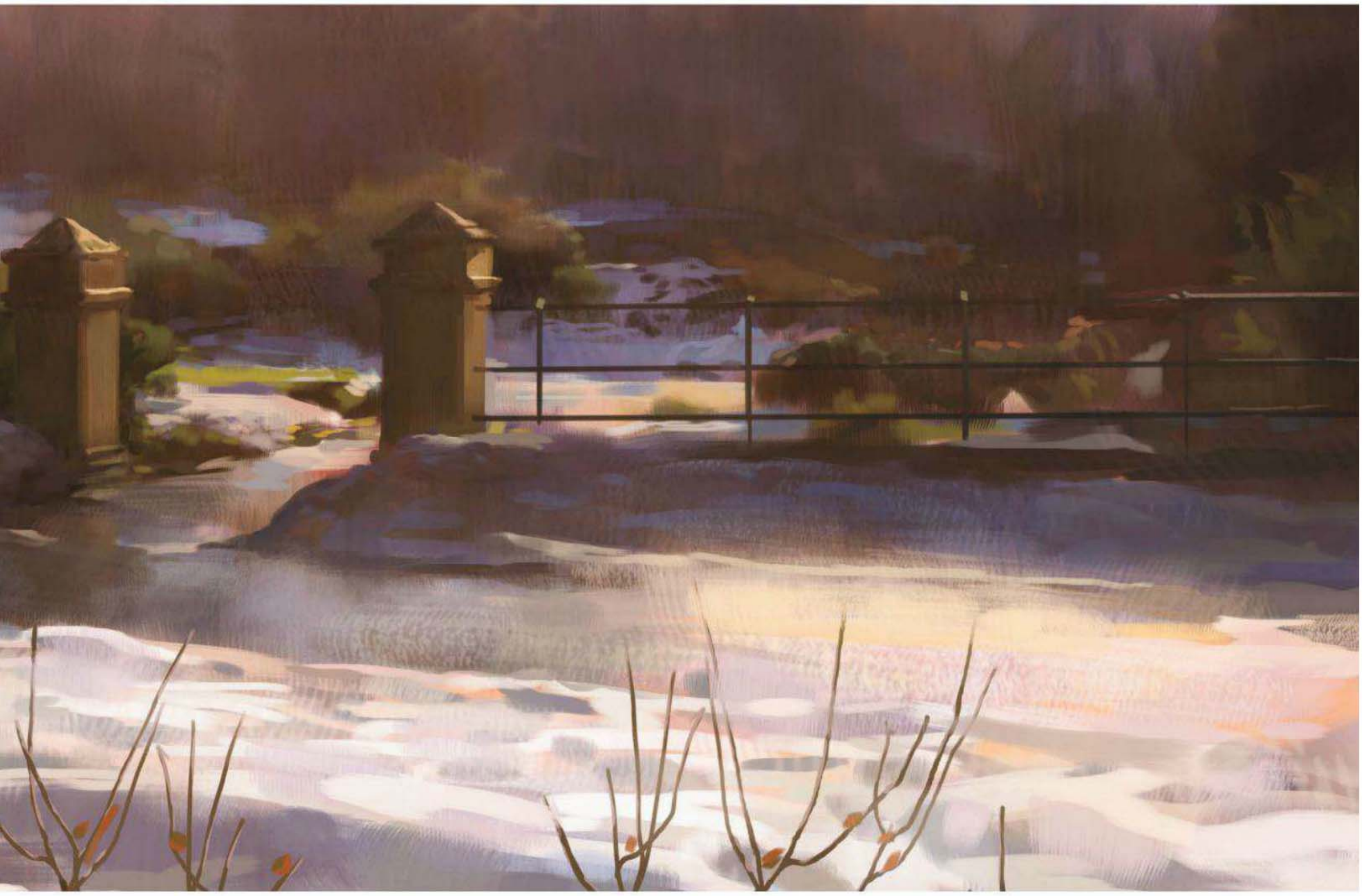
Welcome to my first ever digital plein air tutorial! I'm going to go over one of my current favourite things in digital painting – painting a traditional landscape from life en plein air. En plein air is French for 'in the open air'. This is a great approach that I believe can really help to push our understanding of light and colour when painting, and happens to be a surprisingly challenging exercise, especially after only studying photos of landscapes. I've been doing this for a while now, and I use an Asus EP121 with Photoshop CS6, and sometimes Paint Tool Sai for sketching out lines.

It's a really exciting time for digital art, as for the first time we can step outside and paint the sunlit world digitally. There's some beautiful art being made at the moment through this method, and a whole lot can be learned from it as well.

A lot of artists I know have found that doing digital still life paintings of their desk is a great way to learn about light, colour, materials and forms — and I like to think of this as an even more awesome and inspiring version of that.

We can really see the effects plein air painting had on the traditional art world when artists such as Claude Monet started documenting the sunlit world and its vibrant colours with oil paints. Today I will be attempting to follow in these artists' footsteps, but this time using digital tools.

So grab your tablet or laptop and prepare to open your eyes to a new way of digital painting… and have fun!



1 Hardware

Any tablet or smartphone with any painting software is suitable, or even just a laptop and a tablet. Although I use Photoshop, I'm keeping brushes and software tools simple, so it works with any set-up. As I'm a shortcut addict, I use a cheap USB numpad I ordered online, and use Randyrant's SharpKeys to map the USB numpad to keyboard letters, which can be set up as shortcuts in any painting software.

2 On-screen buttons

On a tablet, painting software tends to be designed much better for touch screens, so for those this kind of device isn't needed. But on Windows tablets, there is a good on-screen display 'Paintdock' (The first results on Google for 'paintdock'). This is another great free program for on-screen buttons. Personally I like to work in full screen without anything obstructing my view, so I usually stick to hardware for shortcuts.

3 Taking along the right kit

Depending on where I go to do my painting, I often make use of a cheap, collapsible camping stool. These really expand the options of where I can paint from, but it can add a bit of weight to my bag. Benches are usually placed in scenic locations otherwise, and a blanket might be a good idea. Hand-warmers are great in the winter, and I use external battery packs for the tablet during extended painting sessions.

4 Defeating glare

When painting under the sun, there can be a problem of glare on the screen. This gets in my eyes and dims the screen, and I will end up looking at some very bright, saturated paintings when reviewing the painting inside. Even on the best screens this is a problem, so working on an easel rotated away from the sun is a good solution, or I normally use a tripod-mounted umbrella as a sunshade. This also helps block inclement weather..

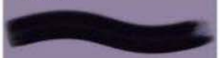
5 Starting to paint

I take some time finding a location, but not too long. A big challenge will be in handling the sun. The earlier I start the better, especially in the winter months where there are less hours of daylight. Setting up around sunrise is really the most ideal, especially when I am on a tight schedule. I'd already scoped out my location before, and knew there would be benches so I didn't have to bring the camping stool this time.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

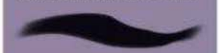
PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: ROUGH

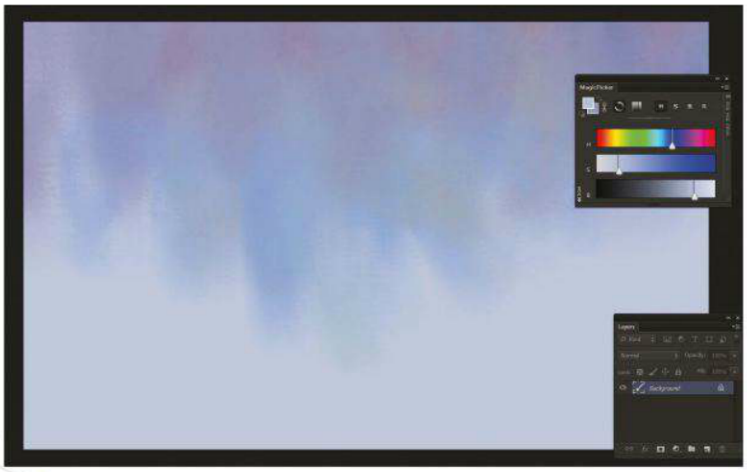


Used to block in the painting early on. Gives a nice texture and 'grip' to the canvas. Can be used during painting to remove focus and unwanted details.

CUSTOM BRUSH: PAINT

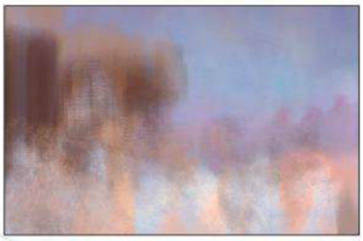


I use this with a low flow, typically 15-35 per cent to develop soft areas, or 100 per cent to mark down more confident and opaque strokes.



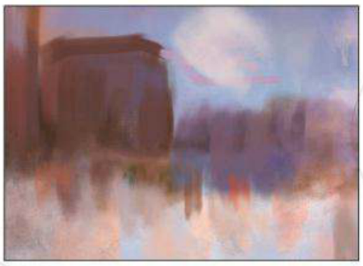
6 Painting – a clear workspace

This is my workspace for most of the painting. On a desktop I work entirely in full screen, but I like to use MagicPicker for colours on my Asus EP121. There are only very rare times I need to use something in Photoshop's menus that can't be accessed by a shortcut, so I'm able to work with few distractions on the screen. This is especially important to me when I am working on a small screened device en plein air.



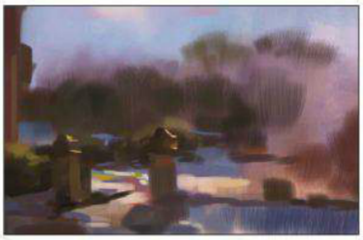
7 Painting – underpaint

Here I'm starting by laying down a loose, bright and warm texture. This will show up later in between the brushstrokes, and using a nicely saturated warm tone will help bring in some much-needed reds into this leafy green piece. I just use any textured brush – it's easiest to just apply a photo of some concrete to any brush and get some noise on there, so that I'm not painting on a flat, sterile surface.



8 Working 'alla prima'

Although I started with an underpainting, the way I work from life will mostly be 'alla prima'. This is the name of the wet-on-wet art technique used by artists from John Singer Sargent to Richard Schmid. It involves trying to place each stroke perfectly, so that they will be there by the end of the painting. I don't have time to layer things up when working to the sun's time, so I have to make every mark count.

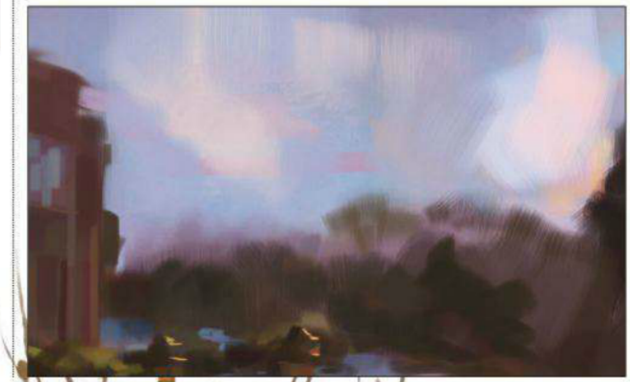


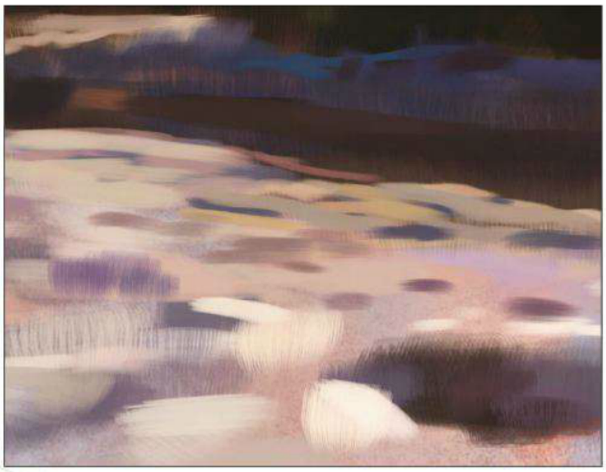
9 Selective focus

Under the sun I don't have time to really make a rendered image, so I am focusing mainly on the gate. This has the happy side effect of keeping focus on it as a detailed area, if I don't over-develop the rest of the painting. I'm really going for accuracy still, even at these early stages. I don't want to have to move things about or be stuck when things don't fit together due to bad measuring at the start.

10 Pushing the sky

You'll soon discover that the values the artist can perceive in daylight vastly outnumber the values a monitor can show, and we need to 'compress' our range of values to our paintings. I'm really establishing the darkest darks I can see at this point. I know in my mind roughly what value the lightest lights will be, but I save placing them to the end as highlights, because I want them on top and solid.





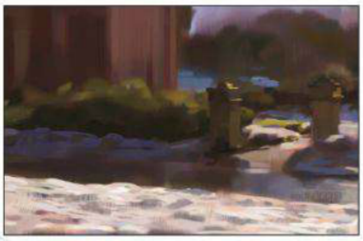
11 Yellow snow

The main thing I want to explore is colour. When observing strongly lit surfaces, we see a beautiful variety of colours and strength of edges that a camera cannot capture. The snow is superbright pinks and yellows on blue, so I place down those colours and break them up with bright whites and darks for shadows to unify the overall values.

PRO SECRETS

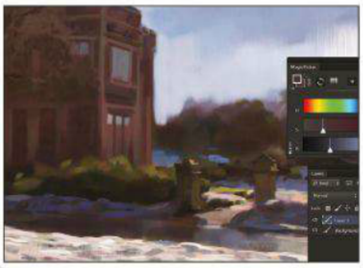
New eyes

It is common practice to flip the image horizontally to see if the painting reads, and isn't unbalanced. I tend to over-rely on this, and often end up rotating the canvas 180 degrees, or making an adjustment layer that desaturates or messes with the colours that I can toggle on and off when I really need to see the painting in a new light.



12 Handling flats

Looking across a landscape, the planes on the floor are very flat, and this means there are a lot of tight horizontal lines on the ground. This shows depth, but needs to be balanced with vertical shapes. I've joined these by inventing a bush between the building and the gates. This adds a layer of depth and balances the colour, and the more random stroke direction of the bushes cuts up the strong horizontals and verticals.



13 Abstraction

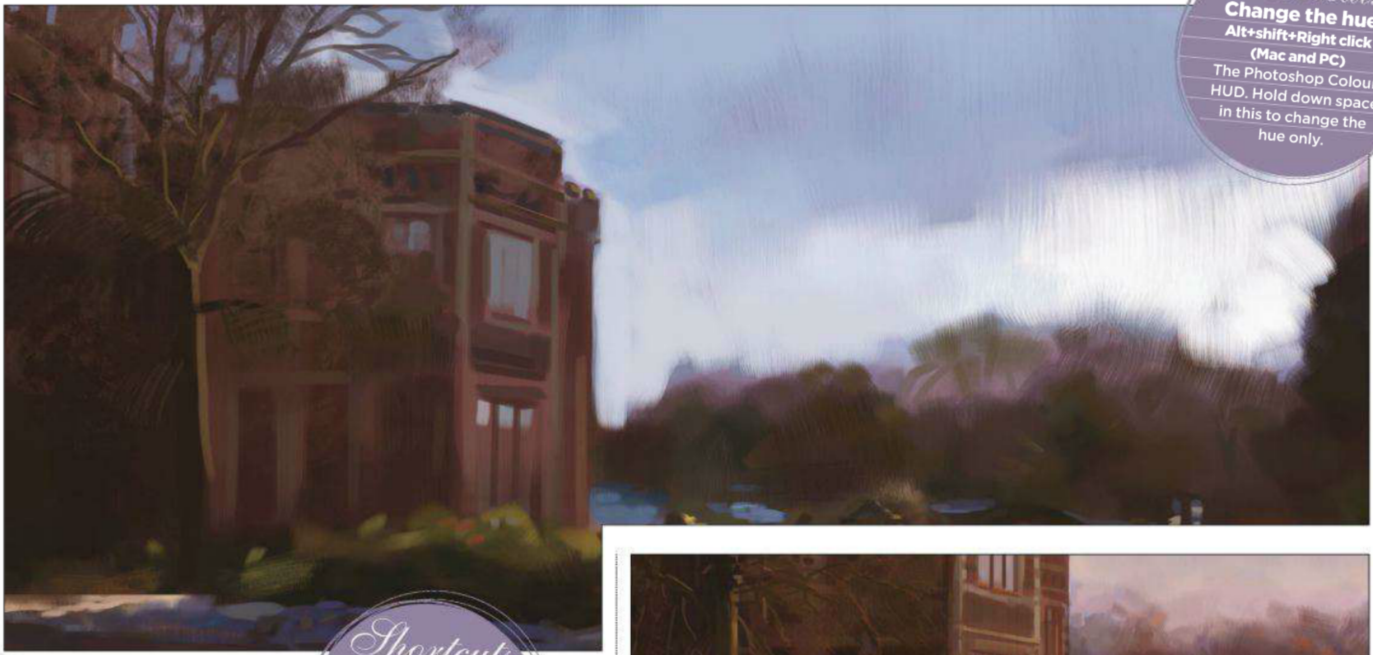
I don't like to be a slave to what is in front of me. Sometimes an element can be just a little off, or the weather on that day might not be great. The artist can push areas about or invent, simplify or remove elements to improve the overall picture. I believe artists as designers should not work like a camera, and this human abstraction is what makes for a really great picture from life.

Shortcuts

Change the hue

Alt+shift+Right click (Mac and PC)

The Photoshop Colour HUD. Hold down space in this to change the hue only.



14 Working with a changing light

I am several hours into the painting now, and I'm finding that the light and colours outside are constantly changing. As the sun travels across the sky, every value and colour changes. In getting the important elements placed down, I can then continue to paint them from my established marks, but I am also having to invent a lot of things as the light changes. This takes quite a bit of practice, as I have to predict early on how the lights will behave on the surfaces throughout the rest of day.

Shortcuts

Declutter

Shift+tab (Mac and PC)

When in full screen mode (f), shift+tab will only bring up necessary panels like layers and colour.

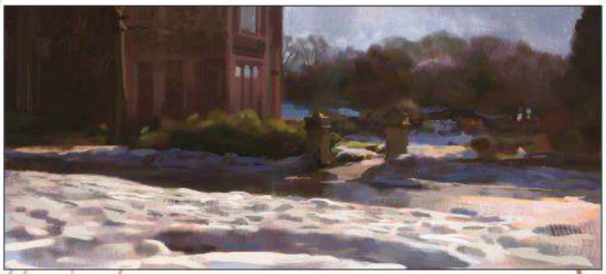
15 Cropping the composition

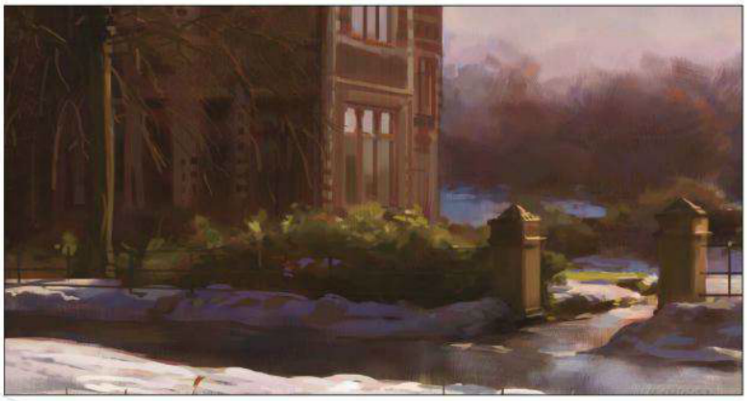
This is a really horizontal composition and I'm not that pleased with how the house is working in the painting. So I decide to try cropping the house down to a more letterbox ratio. Not having any limitation on the size of the canvas throughout a painting can be a really handy advantage over traditional painting. However I do try to avoid relying on this option as a crutch and always attempt to establish a decent composition from the outset, so as not to waste time further down the line.

PRO SECRETS

Zooming out

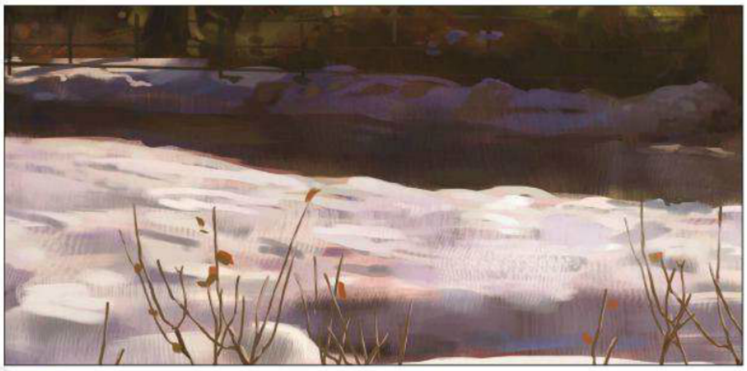
Sometimes I can easily get lost in the details of a painting and not be able to see the forest for the trees. With a traditional set-up, the oil painter is able to take several steps back and assess his work from a distance. As I'm sitting down and not working with my tablet on an easel, the easiest way to follow this is to zoom out now and then, and see if my work still holds up at a much smaller scale.





16 Next day painting

I return another day to start again under sunlight. I pushed the snow in previous steps because I knew that today it will have changed a lot, so from now on I work entirely on the rest of the image. As the morning lighting is much nicer I re-light some of the planes with the Soft Light blending mode, to really strengthen darks and lights on the walls, tree and pillars.



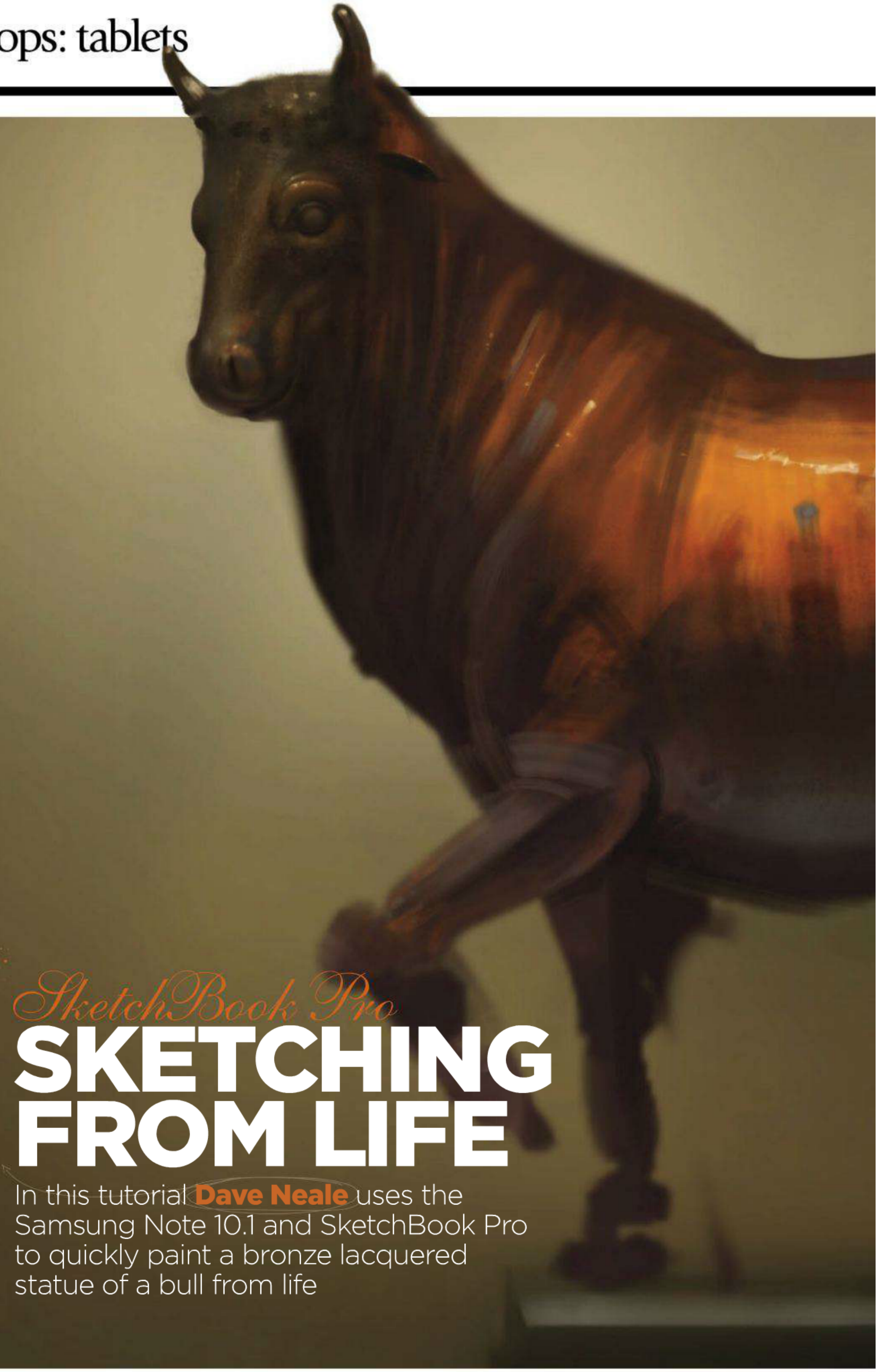
17 Adding details

Unlike a typical client piece, a sunlit study is not something I can spend all day on with rendering. The second day is drawing to a close, and I have taken some photos throughout the day to develop some parts further at home. I am still leaving some warm tones to show through the snow, as careful observation reveals that the sunlit white snow conceals an iridescent rainbow of colours.

18 Finishing up

I've pretty much completed the painting now. I return home and see what it looks like out of the sunlight. The colours tend to be brighter and more saturated, so I dim them down a little bit and unify the lights/darks. I take a break from it for a week, and with fresh eyes touch up details that look out of place. Thanks for reading – I hope you will learn something with this exercise!

Made on Note 10.1



Artist **PROFILE**

Dave Neale

COUNTRY: UK

Dave is a freelance illustrator working in games, publishing and advertising, specialising in drawing stylised characters, creatures and environments.

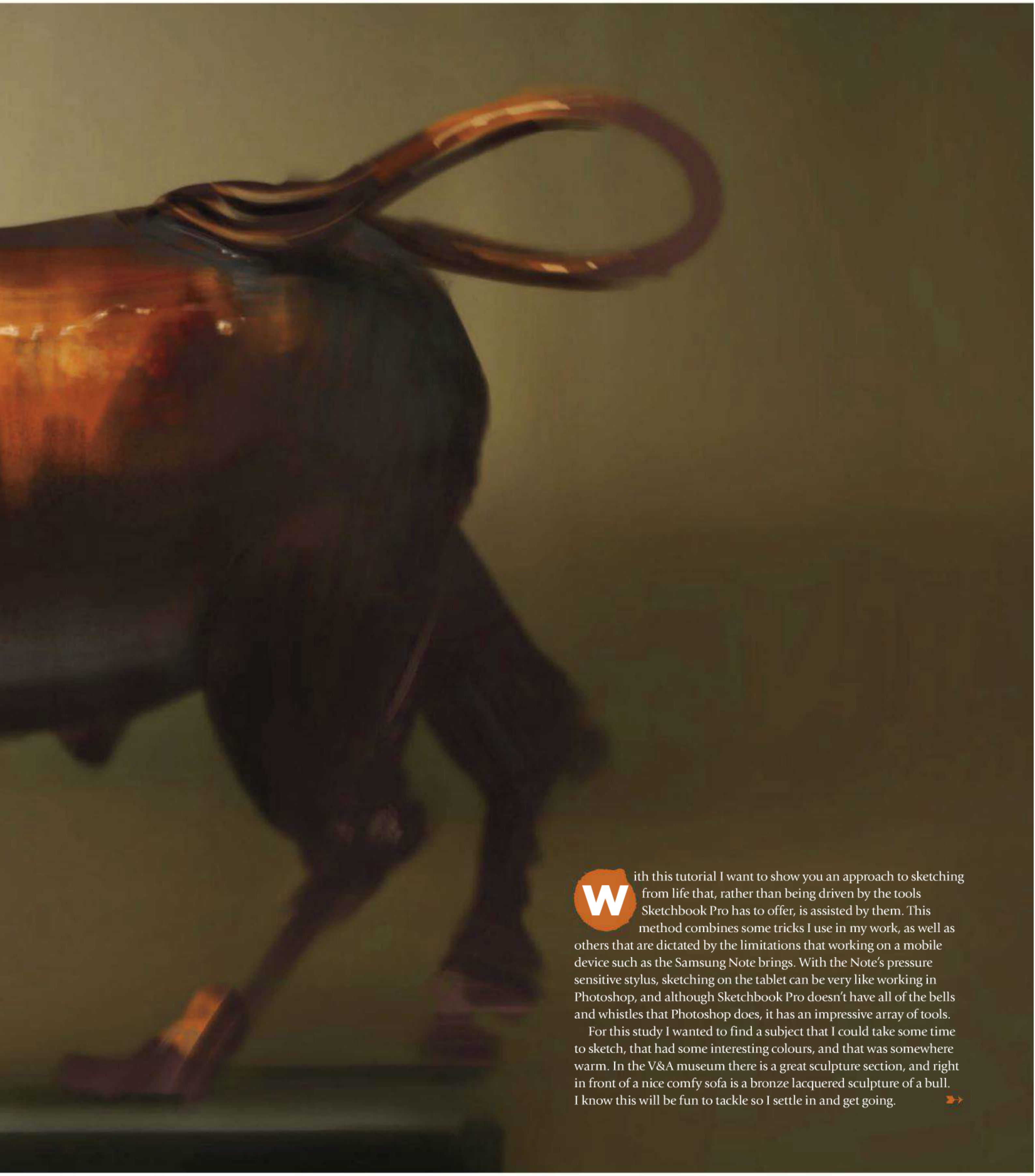
www.bit.ly/nealed

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/dp-sketch

SketchBook Pro

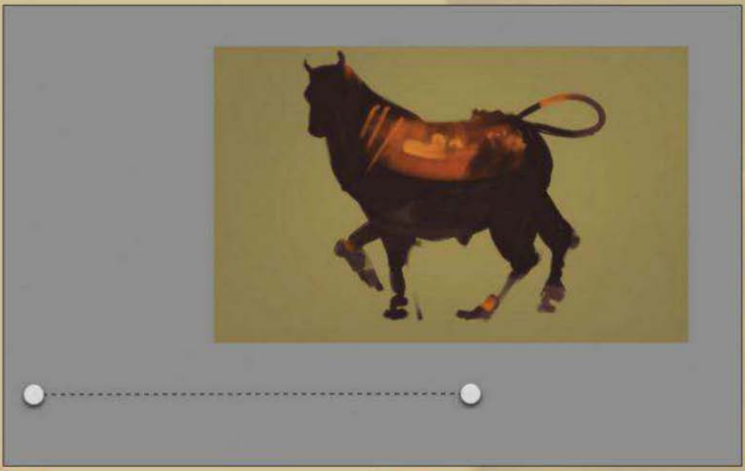
SKETCHING FROM LIFE

In this tutorial **Dave Neale** uses the Samsung Note 10.1 and SketchBook Pro to quickly paint a bronze lacquered statue of a bull from life



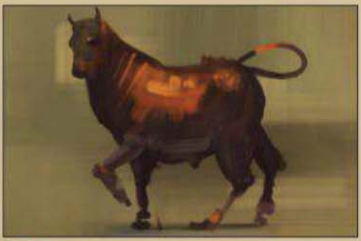
With this tutorial I want to show you an approach to sketching from life that, rather than being driven by the tools Sketchbook Pro has to offer, is assisted by them. This method combines some tricks I use in my work, as well as others that are dictated by the limitations that working on a mobile device such as the Samsung Note brings. With the Note's pressure sensitive stylus, sketching on the tablet can be very like working in Photoshop, and although Sketchbook Pro doesn't have all of the bells and whistles that Photoshop does, it has an impressive array of tools.

For this study I wanted to find a subject that I could take some time to sketch, that had some interesting colours, and that was somewhere warm. In the V&A museum there is a great sculpture section, and right in front of a nice comfy sofa is a bronze lacquered sculpture of a bull. I know this will be fun to tackle so I settle in and get going.



1 Putting down an initial layout

I begin by filling the canvas with the average colour of the background and blocking in an image of the bull on a layer above. Once I'm happy with the silhouette I lock the layer so that I'm then only painting within the silhouette. Then, in order to add the plinth under the bull I use the Straight Line tool which allows you to set an angle and then every stroke you draw is at that same angle (just like a ruler).



2 Blocking in the big shapes

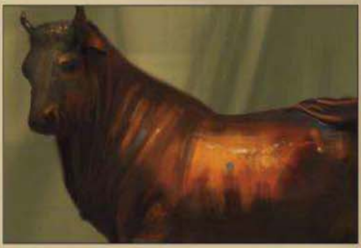
Now, continuing to work within the silhouette, I start to add loose strokes to both the bull and the background. I do a lot of squinting at this stage to enable my eyes to lose the finer detail and concentrate instead on the bigger forms and colours. I find that keeping the brush strokes big and approximating the forms rather than getting lost in detail at this point really helps me keep a cohesive image later.

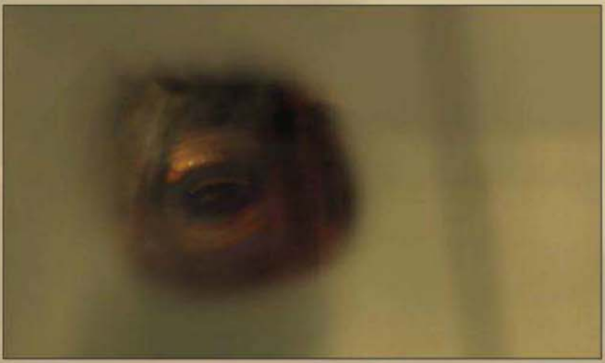
3 Trying different brush settings

I play around a little with the brush settings and vary the brush size parameters. I find this is something that can be a really great advantage with the Samsung Note due to its pressure sensitivity, unlike the iPad's capacitive stylus input. It's nice to have these customisable brushes available in SketchBook Pro, however I find for the most part I tend to keep to just one or two brushes.

4 Starting to add detail

At this point I've roughed in a lot of loose information, and now I start adding details. I get a lot tighter with the placements of folds, shadows and highlights but still keeping my brush strokes as large as possible. I sometimes create new layers and merge them down when I'm happy with them, erasing areas that don't work before I do, and I zoom in and out of the image, something that is intuitive with the pinch movement that is so common now with touch screens.





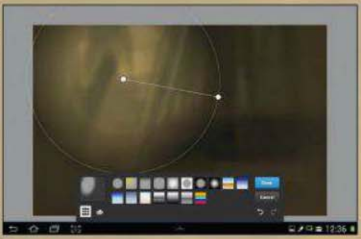
5 Moving things around

I decide that the eye is in the wrong place and so instead of re-drawing it, I decide to rescale it. Now this isn't as simple as it would be in Photoshop, but is actually pretty easy. I duplicate the bull layer and then erase all but the eye, I can then use the Transform tool to scale and move the eye into its new position, and merge down the layer once I've done this.

PRO SECRETS

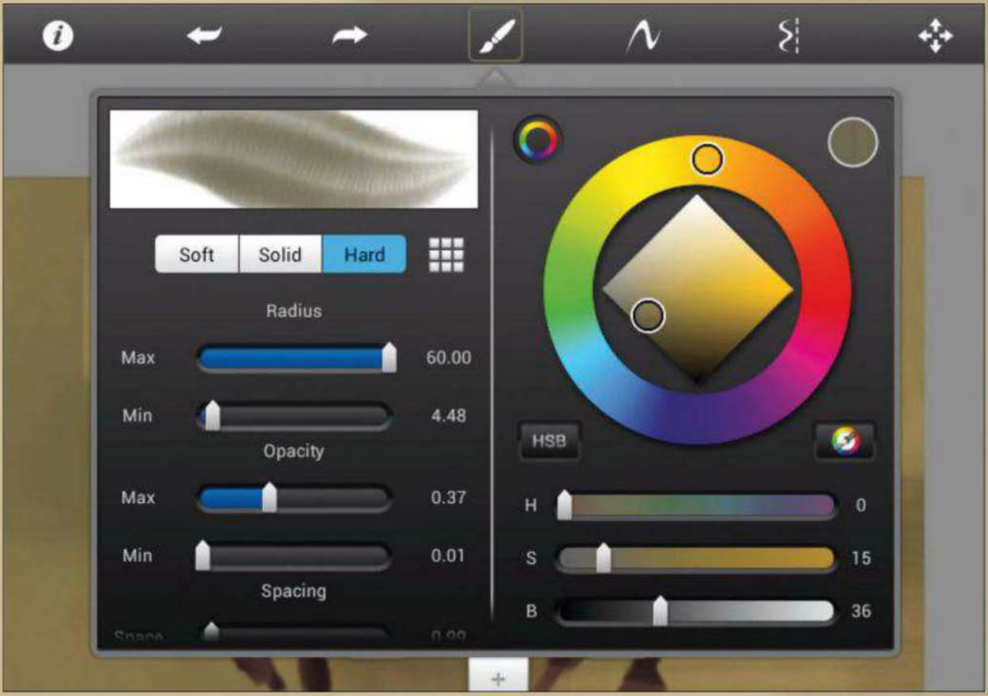
Zooming in and out

The beauty of a digital device such as the Samsung Note is that, unlike traditional media you can zoom in really close to add fine details, or zoom right out (the equivalent of stepping back from the image). I love how easy it is to pinch the image (just place two fingers on the screen and then drag the image), and move to whichever part of the image you want.



6 Photoshop Touch

I don't like the strokes on the background, so I have a play with that. I take the background into Photoshop Touch, which I don't like for painting, but which does have a better array of editing tools and use the Gaussian blur and Gradient tools to adjust the background and give more focus to the bull's head, which is my main area of focus.

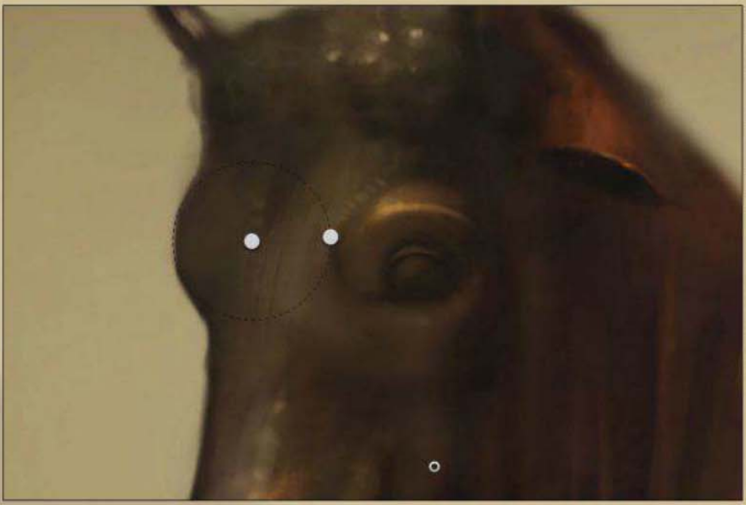


Radius
Max 60.00
Min 4.48

Opacity
Max 0.37
Min 0.01

Spacing

H 0
S 15
B 36



9 The head

I'm happy with the general direction now, but feel that the head needs a lot of work so I decide to refine it. I use the Circle tool, which is similar to the Line tool I used earlier (this one is like having a compass). It allows you to define the centre point and shape (oval to circular) and you can then paint or erase to that same shape. I think this is a great tool, and use it to round-off the eye with the eraser.

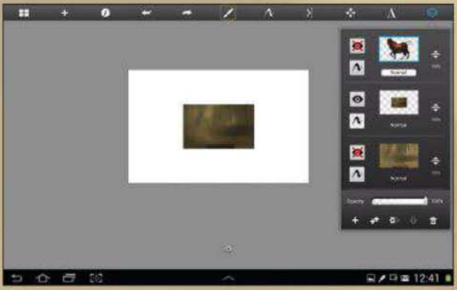
PRO SECRETS

Make it sharp

Use the Line and Circle tools for sharp geometry. These don't just place a line or circle on the page. You can draw with a brush in the direction of, or around your pre-determined shape.

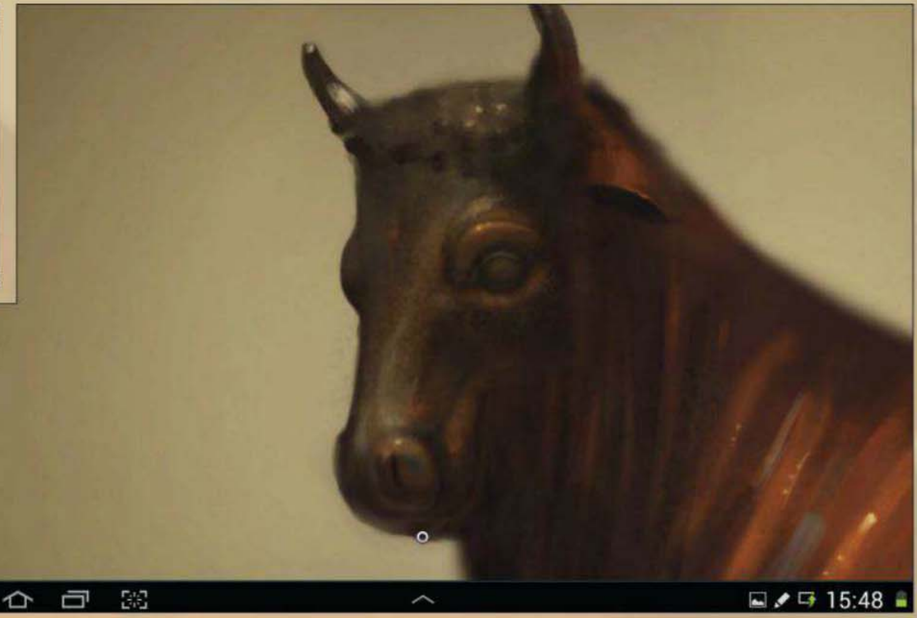
10 Detailing

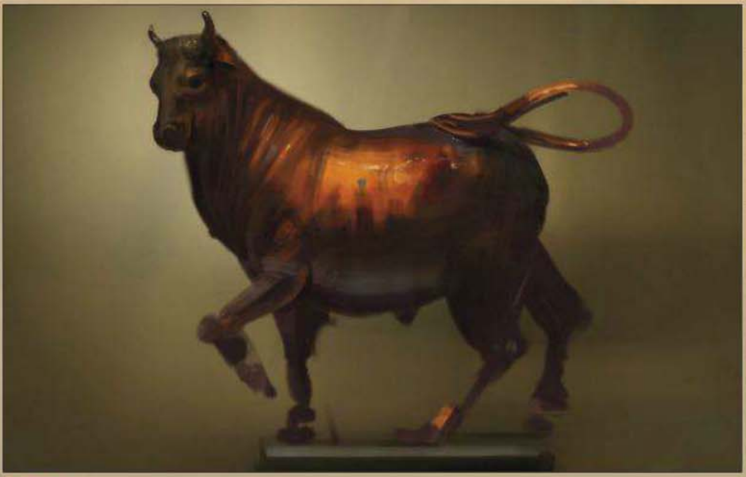
I've got to the point where I can't see enough detail where I'm sitting (I'm around a metre and a half away) so I get one of the stools the V&A provides and sit as close to the sculpture as possible. Close up it's a lot easier to refine the details of the face. I can see the textures I couldn't see from further away, as well as the subtle saturation shifts that occur even within the saturated orange areas.



7 Adding focus

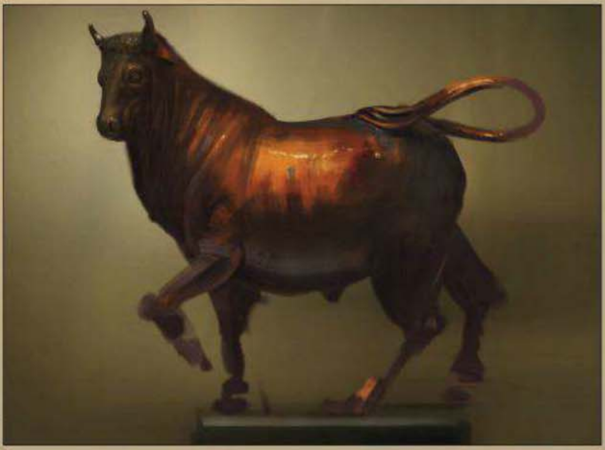
I then take the image back into SketchBook Pro, and keep the layer small so I can apply a lighter area around the head of the bull with the Airbrush. There is a limit to the maximum size the Airbrush will go so keeping the layer small allows me to make a smooth gradient. I then scale the background up and erase the plinth area so that it is still crisp. I feel that this one bit of artistic licence I use really helps the image.





8 Getting tighter

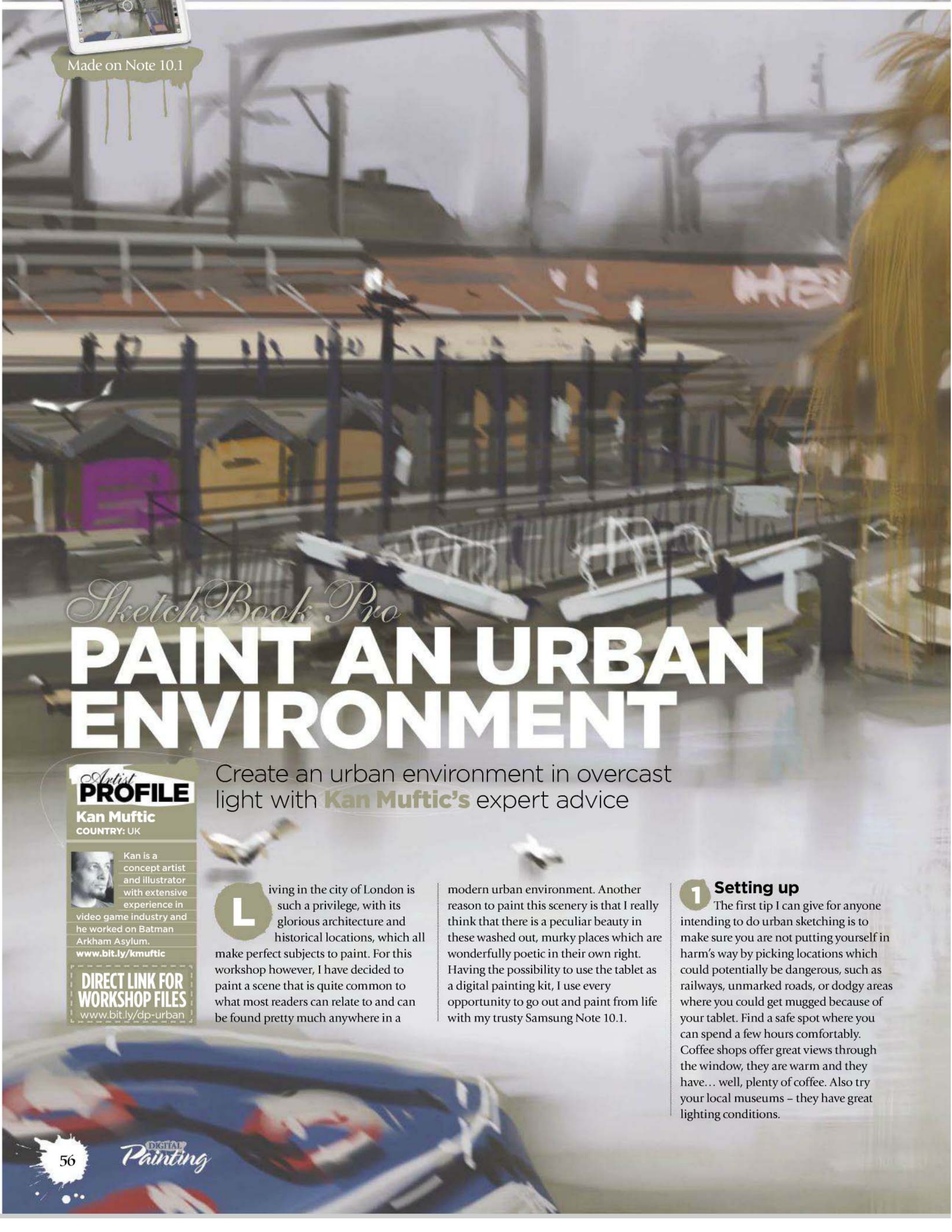
I continue adding details, trying to get the hues and saturation of my colours as close as possible. One of the interesting things I found was that in amongst the very saturate highlights and shadows there were areas of total desaturation. I really like how these isolated areas play against the saturated oranges and reds (in the area where the tail meets the back for example).



11 And I'm done

After a little more tweaking, bumping up some of the highlights, with closing time approaching I call it done. I like the fact that the legs are pretty rough and the head is a lot tighter, I often get sucked into rendering everything in an image, but that's something I'm trying to move away from so this was a good way to do that. I'm fairly happy with this study and hope to go out and do more like it soon.

Made on Note 10.1



SketchBook Pro

PAINT AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Create an urban environment in overcast light with **Kan Muftic's** expert advice

Artist **PROFILE**

Kan Muftic

COUNTRY: UK

Kan is a concept artist and illustrator with extensive experience in video game industry and he worked on Batman Arkham Asylum.

www.bit.ly/kmuftic

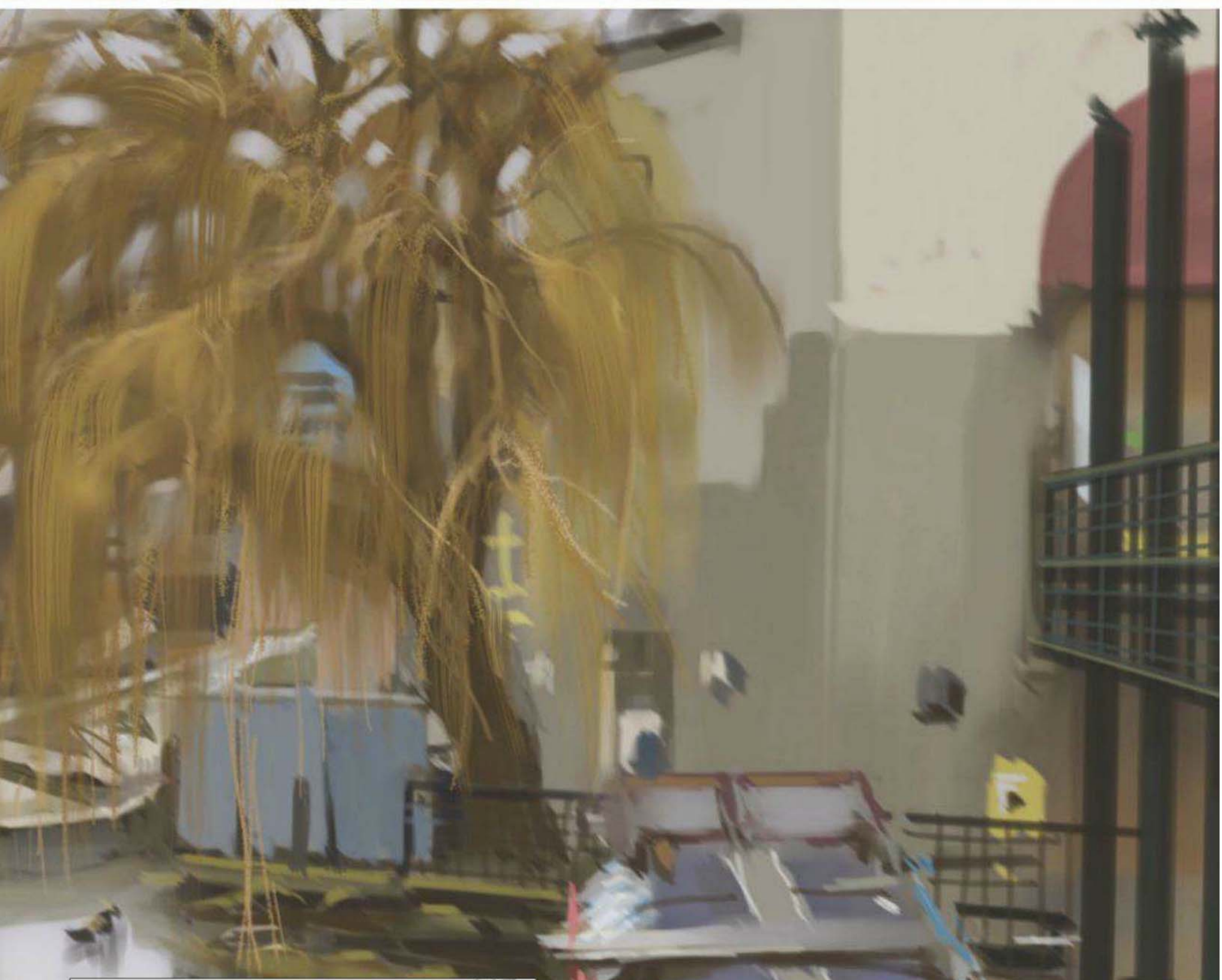
DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES

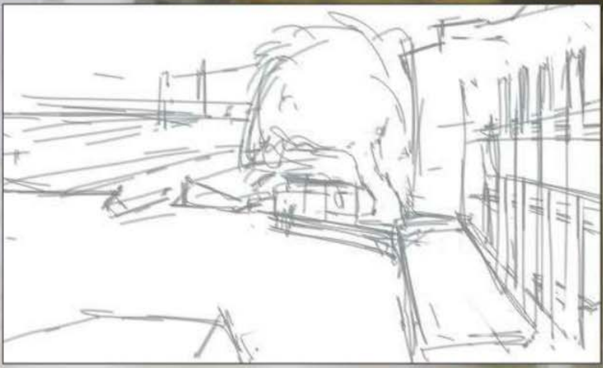
www.bit.ly/dp-urban

Living in the city of London is such a privilege, with its glorious architecture and historical locations, which all make perfect subjects to paint. For this workshop however, I have decided to paint a scene that is quite common to what most readers can relate to and can be found pretty much anywhere in a modern urban environment. Another reason to paint this scenery is that I really think that there is a peculiar beauty in these washed out, murky places which are wonderfully poetic in their own right. Having the possibility to use the tablet as a digital painting kit, I use every opportunity to go out and paint from life with my trusty Samsung Note 10.1.

1 Setting up

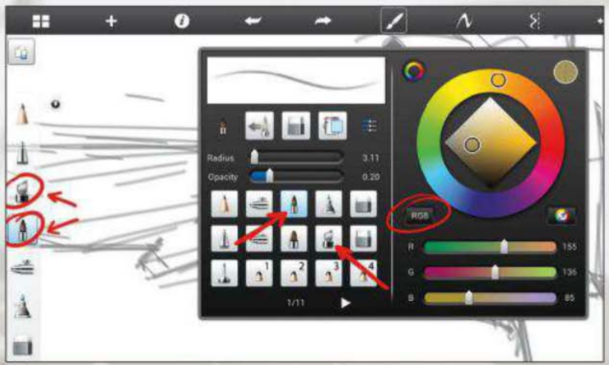
The first tip I can give for anyone intending to do urban sketching is to make sure you are not putting yourself in harm's way by picking locations which could potentially be dangerous, such as railways, unmarked roads, or dodgy areas where you could get mugged because of your tablet. Find a safe spot where you can spend a few hours comfortably. Coffee shops offer great views through the window, they are warm and they have… well, plenty of coffee. Also try your local museums – they have great lighting conditions.





2 Lay-in

I fire up my Sketchbook Pro. This is the most intuitive and easy to use software I have ever encountered. Facing a real-life environment can be overwhelming, so I decide to pick out a section from my field of vision that would make an interesting composition. Then, I take a moment to observe. It is impossible to process all the details at once so I have to simplify the scene and group objects into large masses. I quickly lay in some very rough marks defining my composition.



3 Tools

For quick sketching and solid marks, I use the Marker brush, and for most of this workshop, I use the Oil brush. The Marker is just amazing for sketching while the Oil brush really does a great job of creating creamy strokes which I love so much. In fact, I prefer it to any other digital brush in any available software on the market. Next, I change the colour mode to RGB, mainly because I am more used to it.

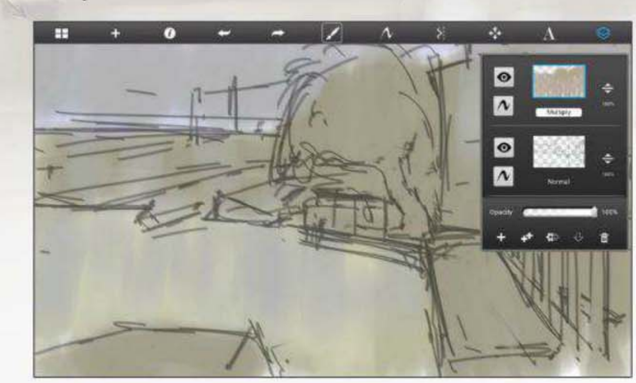
PRO SECRETS

Working in public

Learn to accept the fact that you will be surrounded by a lot of people when sketching in public. Some of them will approach you and ask questions about your work, kids will shout and jump around you, you will not be comfortable sitting on the benches, and so on. But working from life is an irreplaceable experience which you will learn a great deal from.

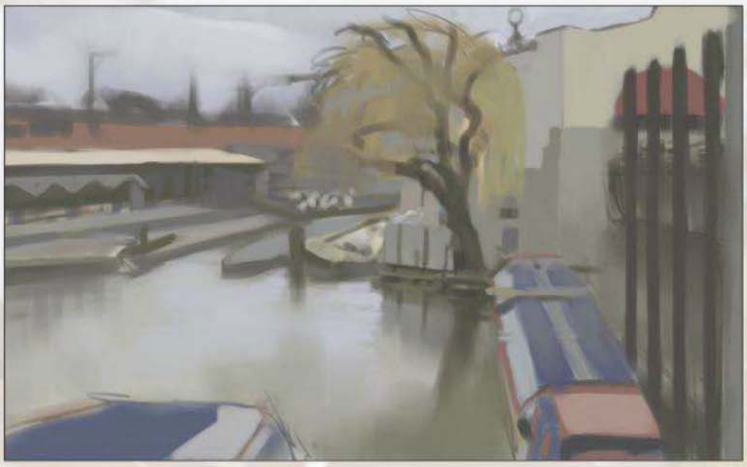
4 Colour foundation

Normally, I would paint straight on top of my lines but since I am facing a rather tricky palette, I create a new layer and set it to Multiply. That way I allow myself more room to make mistakes and to fix them, without losing the main composition. I observe carefully again. I need to find colours that dominate the scene. This step will influence everything I do afterwards, so I take my time. It's all about trial and error at this point. Real life colours are quite tricky to get so again, I simplify them into the ones that seem most prominent.



5 Overcast

I picked a day with grey sky which we define as overcast light. There are no spectacular bright colours or dark cast shadows, which makes the scene look a bit flat. But there is one huge advantage when painting overcast from life: it stays the same! Anyone who ever painted from life will know how frustrating it can be to have light changing in a matter of minutes. Overcast will remain the same for the majority of the day. Also in overcast, you will find a great amount of local colours, unaffected by strong sunlight. I start putting a lot of different colours down but I keep them within the similar value range. I add a Normal layer on top of the Multiply one and paint in a Normal layering mode.



6 Colour matching

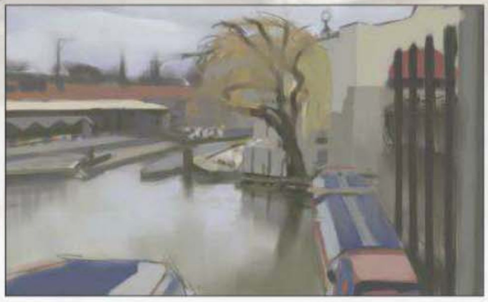
A lot of times, artists stylise and enhance real-life colours in order to increase the dramatic impact on the viewer. Other times, it is about trying to capture the moment as it is. I am taking the latter approach which requires a lot of exploration. I constantly paint stroke on top of stroke, while trying to exactly match the colours I see in front of me. Avoiding Undo will create a very nice illusion of underpainting and will provide richness to the final piece.

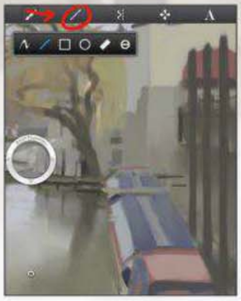
7 Binding colours

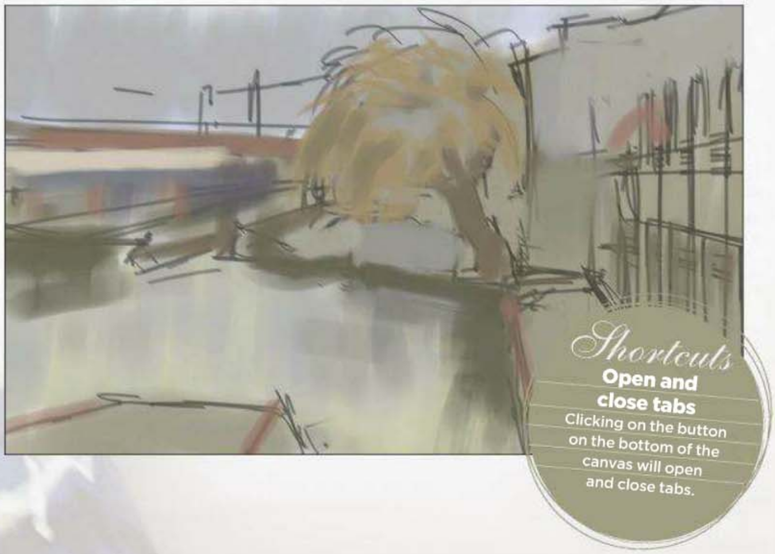
The cloudy sky affects everything I see, so I spend some time matching its colour and value. It turns out being a bit on the cool side, so I 'cool down' the rest of the canvas, particularly in the brighter areas. Putting grey next to warm colours creates an illusion of a bluish tone, just as grey next to cool colours makes it appear warm. Colour relativity can play games with your mind sometimes, so it's a good idea to try all your options.

8 Lining up

In Sketchbook Pro, there is a tool that can be of great help when you are painting urban environments. Open your Tool Selection menu and select the Line tool. Every line you make will be straight and will go in any direction you want. There is a group of pillars on the right-hand side and I want them straight. Since my lines look as if drawn by a baboon on espresso, I use my Line tool to get those pillars lined up nicely.



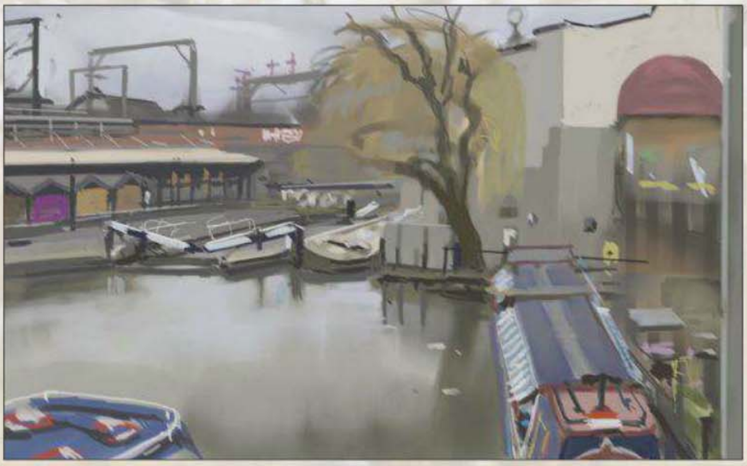




Shortcuts

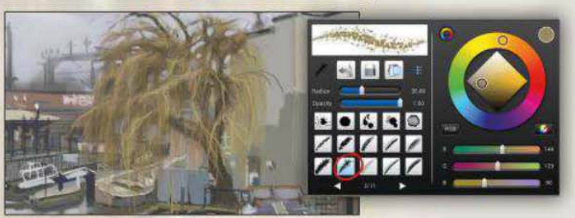
Open and close tabs

Clicking on the button on the bottom of the canvas will open and close tabs.



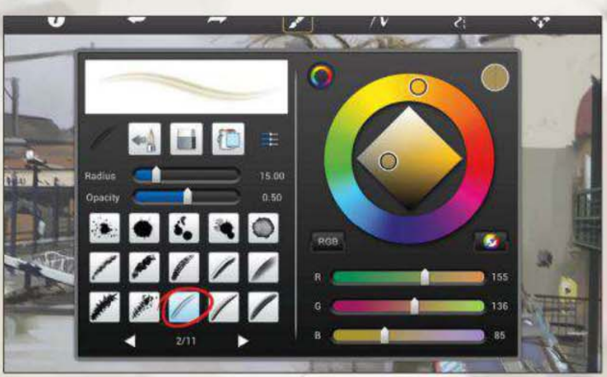
9 Adding dark accents

The painting feels too flat because I don't have the proper range of values. Again, I need to look exactly where to find darkest spots and also, what colour they are. I need to clean up the area behind the pillars because I spotted some warm tones in there. Next, I indicate some structural details on the boat to the right, realising that it is quite an important compositional element in the picture. I still ignore the tree and paint the area behind it. The tree will be a payoff since I find it easier to paint than all those other things I see.



12 Branching out

Time to put more information in the tree. From my brush selection menu, I pick this leafy brush which should give me the right type of texture. I normally pick brushes that leave marks similar to the object I intend to paint. Following the rhythm of the branches, I draw some highlighted sections and still resist zooming in. And very soon, I start realising that it's not working out.



Radius 15.00

Opacity 0.50

RGB

R 155

G 136

B 85

2/11

13 Time to simplify

The tree is a mess and is disturbing the balance of detail across the painting. It is crucial to have a good economy of detail as too much can destroy a piece. So it's time to simplify things. I open up my brush selection menu and pick this streaky brush that leaves marks which indicate the direction of the stroke and with that, the direction of the form.

14 Smoothing things out

I start by grouping tree branches and simply indicating detail, rather than painting it out. It works much better and, with the brush I picked, I paint the hanging branches with no effort at all. Motivated by this little success, I place horizontal strokes across the water surface with the same brush. It takes just a few brush strokes to achieve the effect of water ripples. I go back to my Oil brush and paint some negative space into the tree, which gives the image an immediate depth. Next I push back the distant background because it looked somehow too close. In reality, the distant houses and telephone poles are much darker. This is where I took the liberty of stylising the scene for the sake of readability.

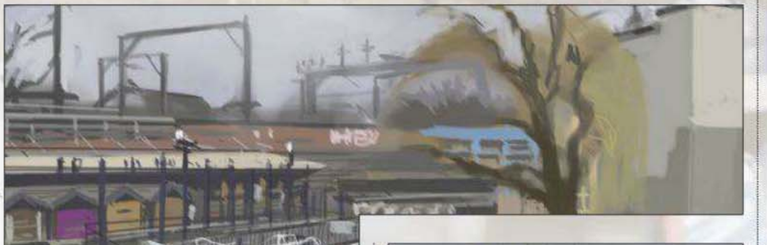
10 Defining elements

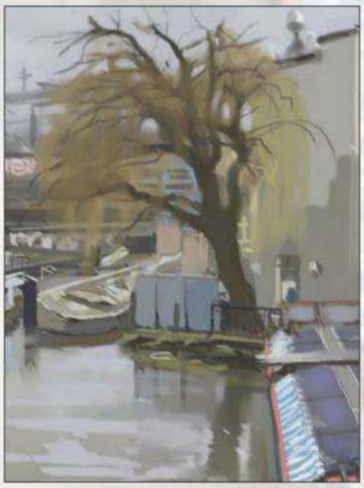
Combining my Marker and Oil brushes, I start defining elements in the picture. The canal lock gives an interesting contrast in values and the water displays nice reflections, so I make sure to capture all that. The little shops on the left and the boats offer a lot of different local colours and I start putting those down. Who would know that there are so many colours on such a grey winter's day?

PRO SECRETS

Be inspired

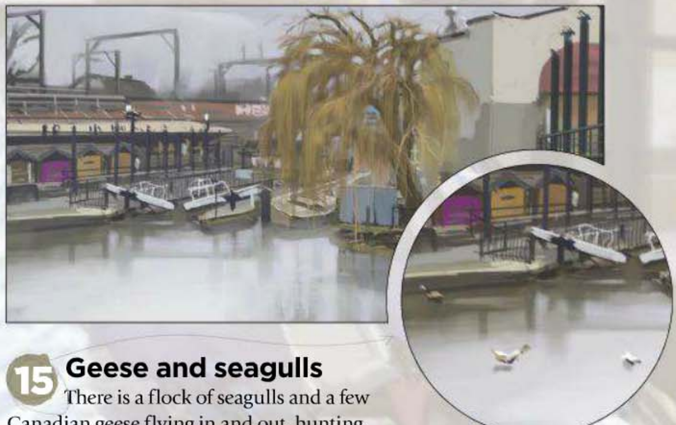
It's a great artist's skill to find beauty in common surroundings. Find intriguing angles, textures, light and people and embrace these in your work.





11 Blocking in the tree

I want to be able to get a hint of the area behind the tree top so firstly, I define its trunk. This gives me a strong base on top of which to paint. However tempting the idea of zooming in seems, I do not allow myself to do that. I group the branches into masses with bold brush strokes. They vary in value and colour so I pay attention to keeping in line with reality. I need a base first which I can detail a bit more in the next step.



15 Geese and seagulls

There is a flock of seagulls and a few Canadian geese flying in and out, hunting, fighting and generally making a lot of noise. Visual noise, that is. So I decide to paint them in. I grab my Marker brush and I try to capture the essence of the birds by putting down just a couple of marks for each one. They put things in reality because we have seen such scenes so many times in our lives that our brain will immediately agree with it. As much as I'd like to keep working on this piece, it's time to move on. I've got plenty of murky overcast days ahead.

ArtRage

PAINT THE TRADITIONAL WAY

Made on Sony Duo

David Kassan reveals how his traditional oil painting background influences his digital tablet studies and sketches

Using Art Rage 4 on the Sony Duo, I'm going to think through this monochromatic study of Jaece in the same way that I would do a basic oil study in my studio from the live model.

I currently have Jaece posing for me a few times a week, and I'm filming the entire experience to produce an instructional documentary of the process. I thought I would grab my Sony Duo one day and work up a digital study as well.

Artist PROFILE

David Kassan

COUNTRY: US

David is a contemporary portrait artist living in New York. He has taught throughout the US, Australia, Spain, Portugal and Iceland, and continues to be a sought-after drawing and painting instructor.

www.davidkassan.com

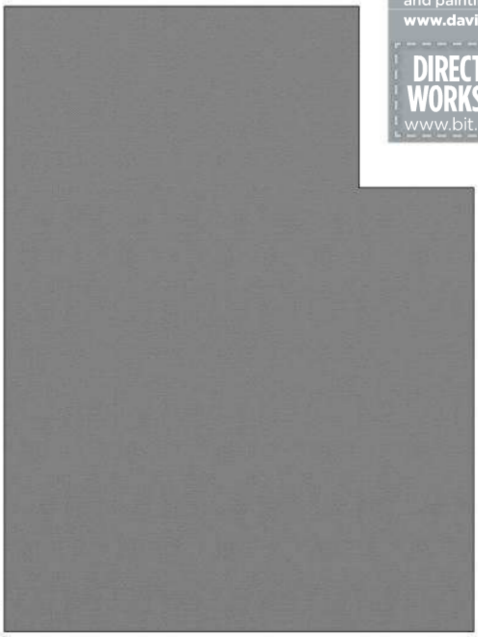
DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES

www.bit.ly/dp-kassan1

Unlike most digital painters, I tend to think of the canvas as if it was a real canvas. I build up everything on only one layer and rarely use the Undo feature. With my traditional paintings I really like the history of my mistakes to come through in different places. I feel that it adds an energy to the finished painting as well as a history to the work.

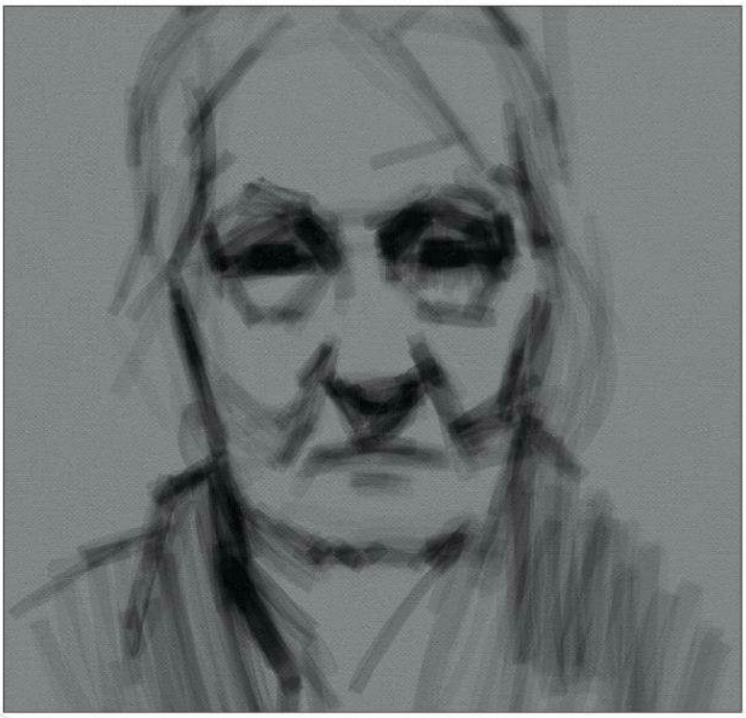
I paint very tightly towards the end of a piece when I'm working traditionally, so these little missteps add a looseness to the reality of the painting – and I really want that to carry over to my digital work too. The basic concepts that I want to cover in this article are how you can accurately block in the shapes of the face relative to what they are next to, as well as seeing the values in context to the whole.

These are basic life drawing and painting concepts that can always be improved upon no matter what your skill level. They are something that I always address in my own work.



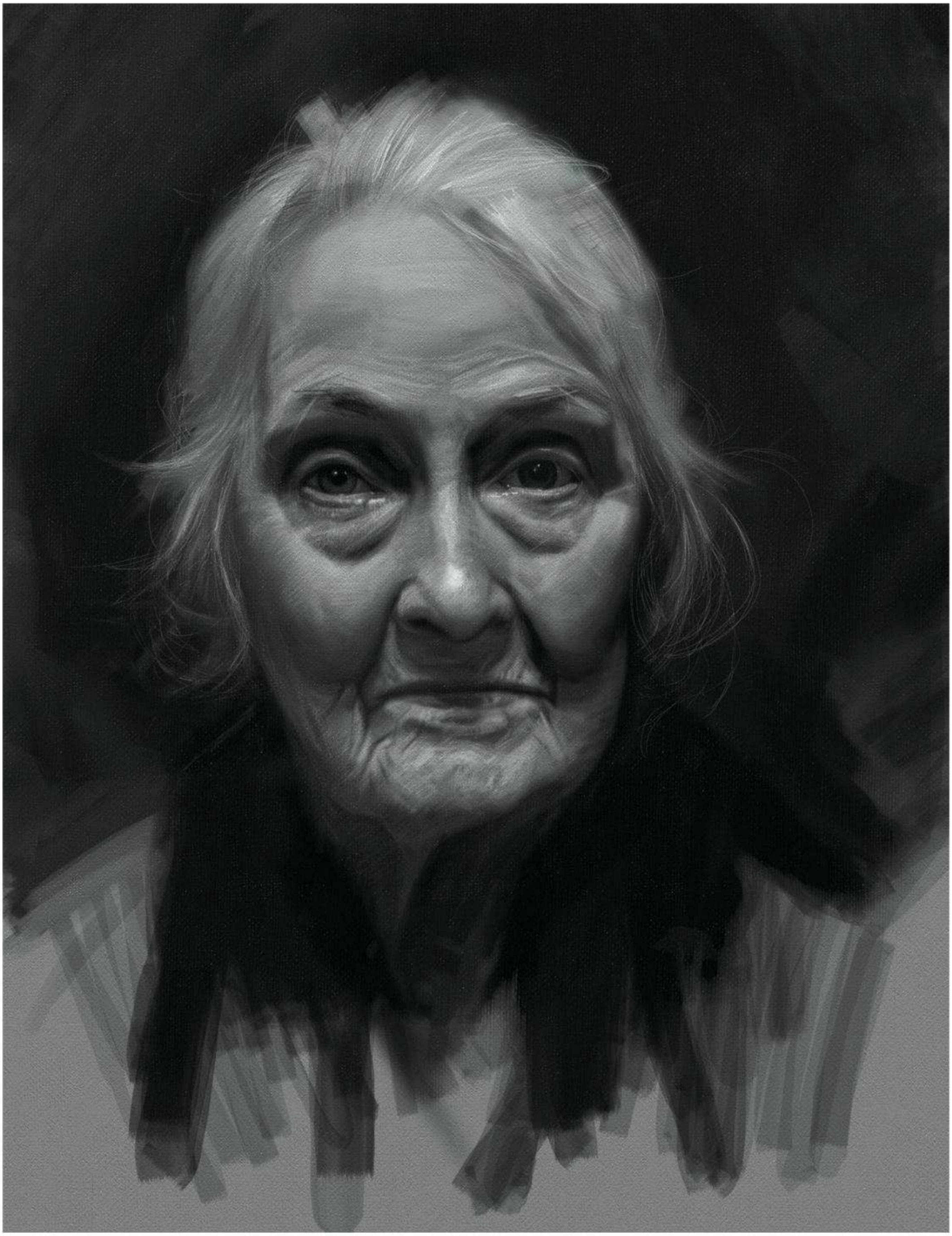
1 Set the canvas

I always start out with a mid value canvas, usually grey. This is what I use in real paint, as well as for my charcoal drawings. It gives us our mid tone right away and makes our lights and darks easy to see right off because we already have something to judge them against. I have also slightly textured the canvas in ArtRage to make it look like a real canvas. This is the strong point of ArtRage.



2 Brush settings

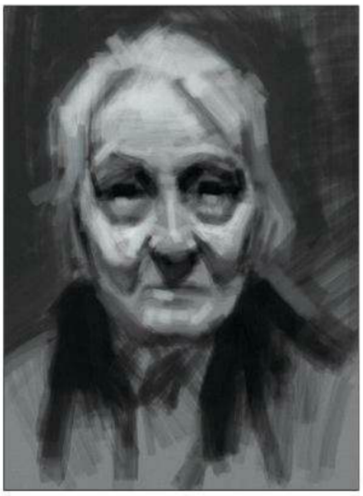
I start off with my brushes set to Full Thinners, Full Loading, and Full Pressure, this is what I pretty much use throughout the entire painting. Because the Sony Duo isn't pressure sensitive I start with a super light brush and build up the values through an overlapping of strokes. In the beginning I block in the large light and shadow shapes, keeping this stage really loose. I want to be as expressive in the beginning as possible. I get super tight towards the end, and I want this expressiveness to carry through so the image doesn't get static or stiff.



PRO SECRETS

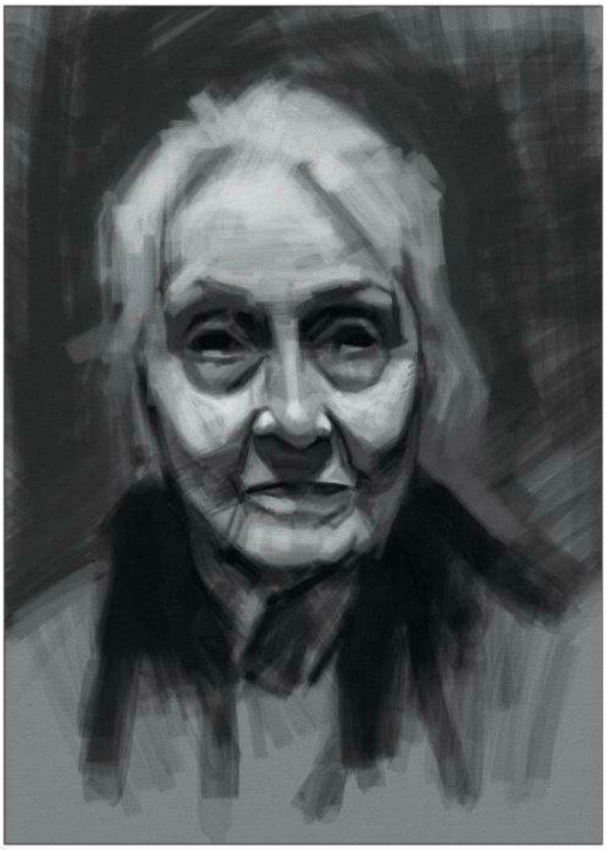
Brush settings

The main setting that I use for the brush is to first turn on the Insta-Dry, then set the level of the Thinners, Loading and Pressure all to 100 per cent.



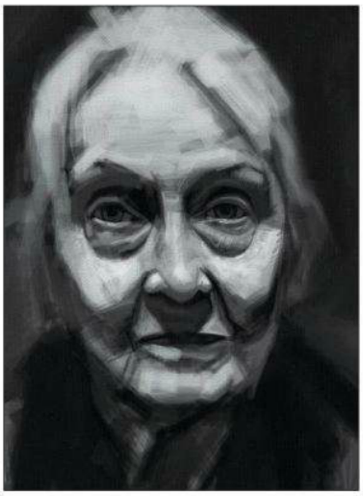
3 Blocking in

I start in with the block in from the light side. I usually switch between shadow and light, because it switches up the shapes on me. This forces me to look at the same shape from two different perspectives, which helps me to get them more accurate. At this stage I'm using pretty large sized brushes and still concerned with the overall shapes. You want to build everything together and not render one eye separate from the other, as they will be disconnected if you do that. She has white hair so I throw in a dark background so that her head will emerge from the painting.



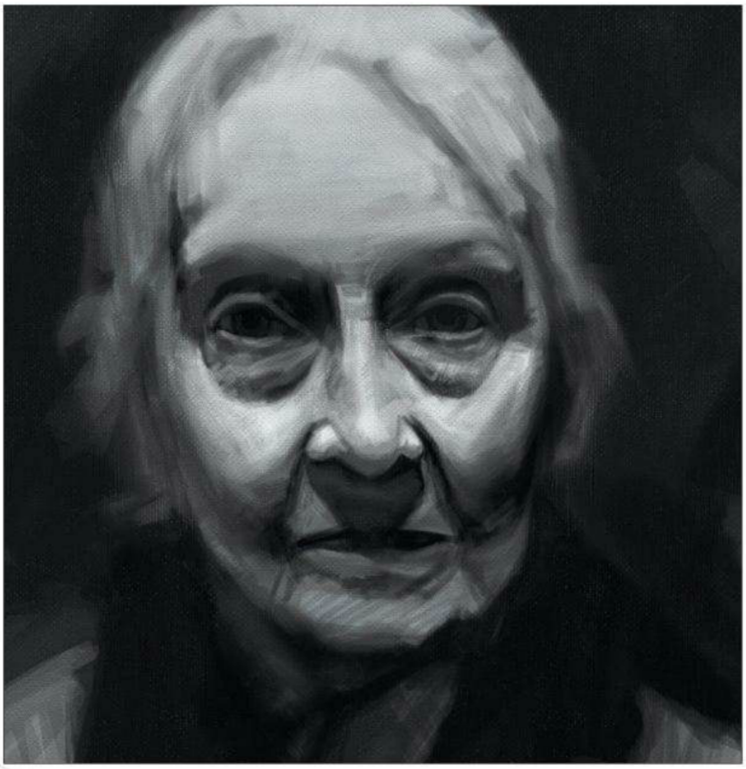
4 Find the form

In this stage I'm starting to get things a little bit more definite. I'm starting to see the shapes and how their edges relate to one another. I'm not concerned with form or edge condition (soft or hard) at this point. Just trying to build up my understanding of everything's relationship to the whole face.



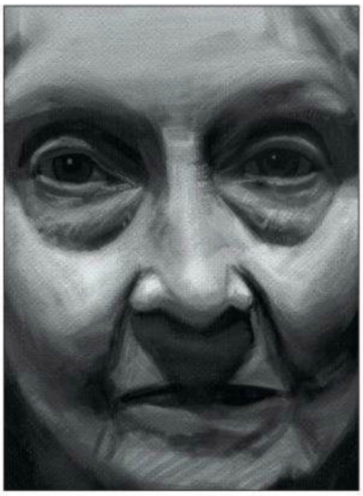
5 Consider the details

Now I'm starting to break down the large shapes into smaller more fractured shapes, as well as darkening the background. By establishing the background values it makes it easier for us to judge the values of the face. Plus, it helps us to think about the atmosphere in which our portrait lives. I'm also starting to develop the structure of the eyes within the orbital cavities. Again, I make sure I develop both eyes at the same time. We want a connectedness to all of the features of the face.



6 Unite the values

I use the Airbrush tool to knock back the values in the lights and halftones. I do this same thing when working traditionally. I'll use charcoal on paper – I use a paper towel to run down the whole drawing to knock down and unite the hierarchy of values, as well as softening the transitions from light to dark.

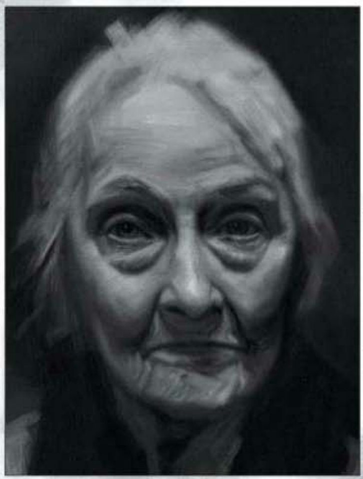


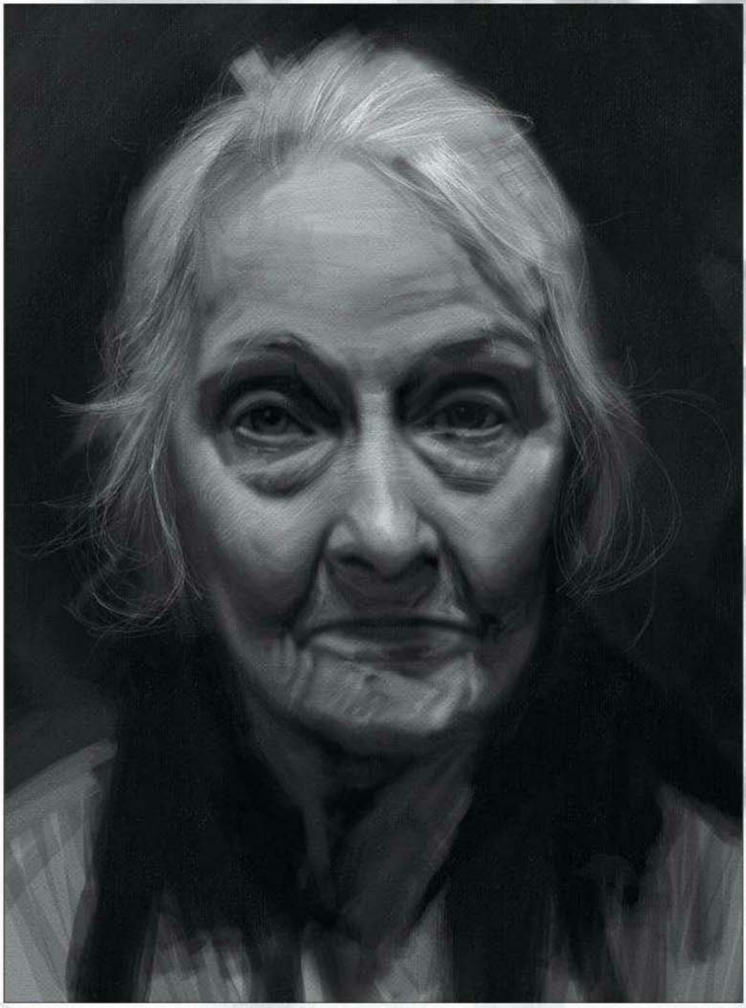
7 Work on the eyes

The main anchor for my drawings is the eyes. I want to connect everything to them and I use them to measure out from. I constantly move either north or south of them for the vertical proportions. Since I'm always returning to the eyes, they tend to be the most developed aspect of my paintings and drawings, which I find is a good thing. Usually within a painting of a person, it is the eyes that the viewer is going to connect with. So in this step, I start developing out from the eyes again.

8 Start blending

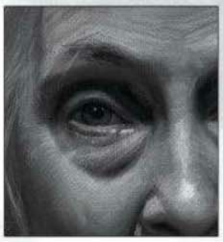
I feel like the painting is getting too 'edgy', so I use the Blur Palette Knife tool to blend out the edges. I also want to get a better understanding of the directional form so I start going over the forehead and cheeks and pull out the rhythms of these different volumes. Nothing is precious. I'm constantly losing and finding shapes of areas. The more I look at something as I work and the more I refine it, the more understood it gets and the closer to who the model is. This method also means there is 'movement' in the painting. I never lock my drawing down – the forms and shapes are constantly in a state of flux, like a human being, even when they are standing still posing.





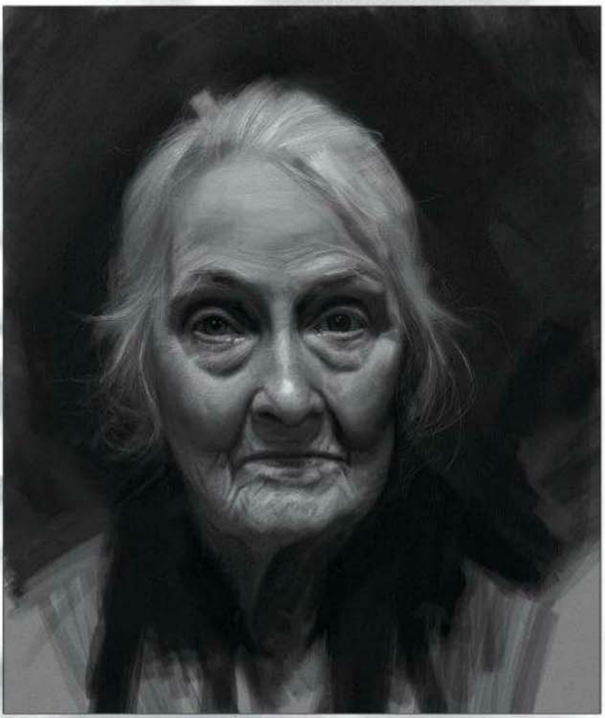
9 Painting hair

In my traditional paintings, I use a small brush to describe form and how it turns. I work in the direction in which the light would fall on the subject. Light hits form perpendicularly. So I break out the 1px little brush to start developing this sort of approach. I also start to think of the direction of the hair with this small brush. Hair is just like any other form. Imagine that the groupings of hair were connected. They would act like a satin ribbon, moving in and out of the shadows and lights. Now imagine that you paint that ribbon and its form – all you have to do is to slice it into a thousand lengthwise strips. Along with these groupings are stray hairs, which are the most fun to paint in. They are a mess of complete randomness and you can really be expressive with them, yet still basing them on the information that you are receiving from the model.



10 Add highlights

I start to bring out the lights again and to meld them into the form. Highlights on skin are always built upon the forms, and almost never separate islands. Also when we have a glassy surface like the eye, the highlights will be reflections of the lights in the room, and are usually the highest value in a painting. So here I define the eyes a little more to put the lights and moisture in, and to really liven up the portrait. I also redraw the mouth and chin areas, getting a better sense of the form and folds.



PRO SECRETS

Magic bullet

A lot of beginner artists ask me about my mediums, brushes, paint and programs, as if they are looking for some sort of magic bullet to be better painters. I used to be there so I know. But what I figured out, is that the magic bullet that made me a better painter was time and experience in front of a live model doing long pose studies.

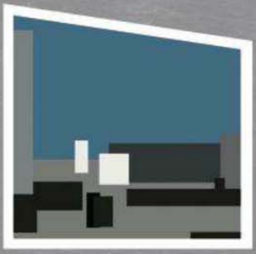
11 Final touches

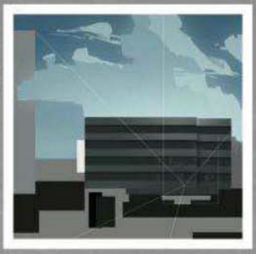
In my mind a painting is never finished, only abandoned. Painting is my understanding of the individual in front of me, so the more time I have with them the more the painting will have of their essence, character and emotion. So to 'finish' this piece, I want to unify everything as well as bring up the highlights. If you look at Rembrandt paintings in real life you will notice that the highlights are always the thickest paint that is applied. So in this same approach, I soften the features slightly and attack those highlights. But even at this point in the painting, I'm still redrawing the chin area and softening it with the Palette Knife tool.

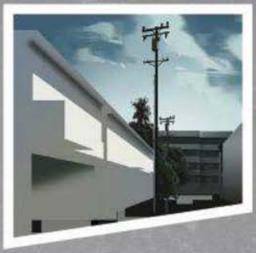
12 Final thought

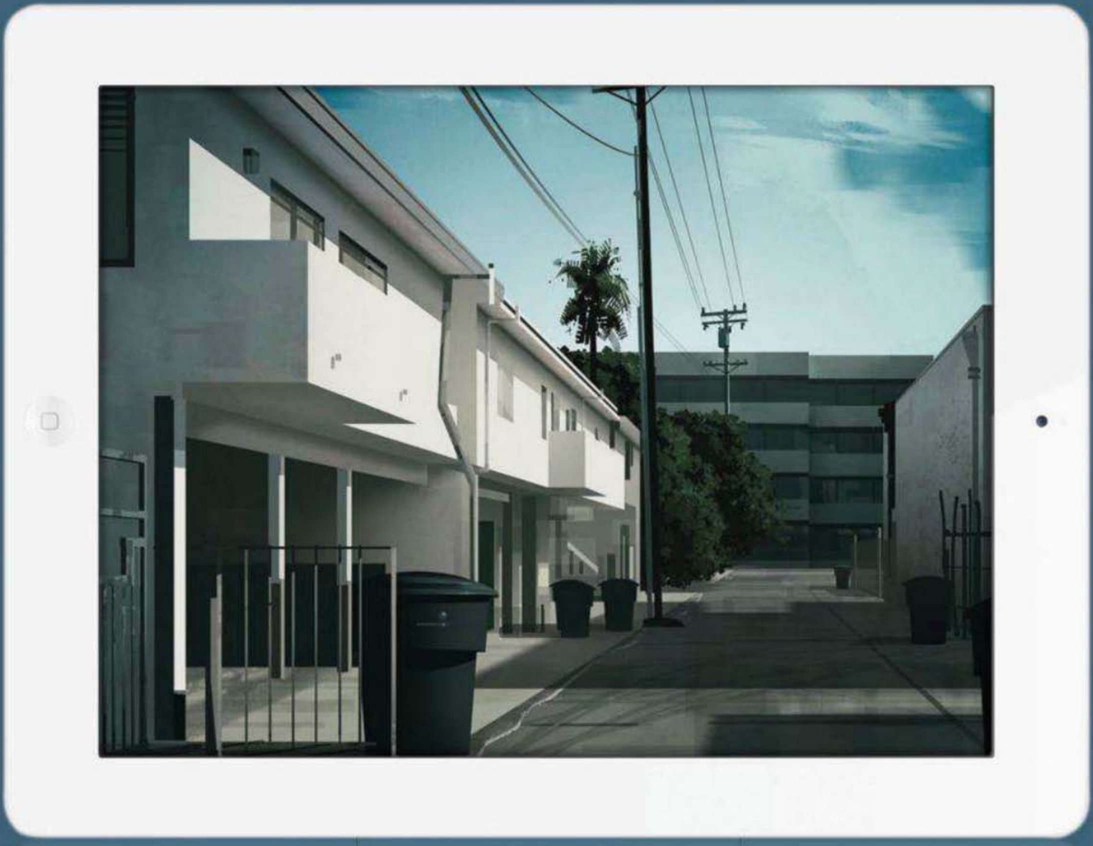
One thing I believe digital painting has over traditional painting is that the sense of luminosity is much easier to conceptualize. A digital painting is already lit from behind. Luminosity is always something that I strive for in my traditional painting, and I feel that by doing the digital work as studies for my traditional work, the benefits of both will really inform what it is that I strive to create.

10 *Artist insight* REALISM TOP TIPS









Robh Ruppel gives you a head start and shares his hard-earned tips and ideas on how to make great art

Artist **PROFILE**

Robh Ruppel

COUNTRY: US

Robh is an experienced art director and a former lecturer at Art Centre College of Design in Pasadena, California.

www.robhruppel.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES

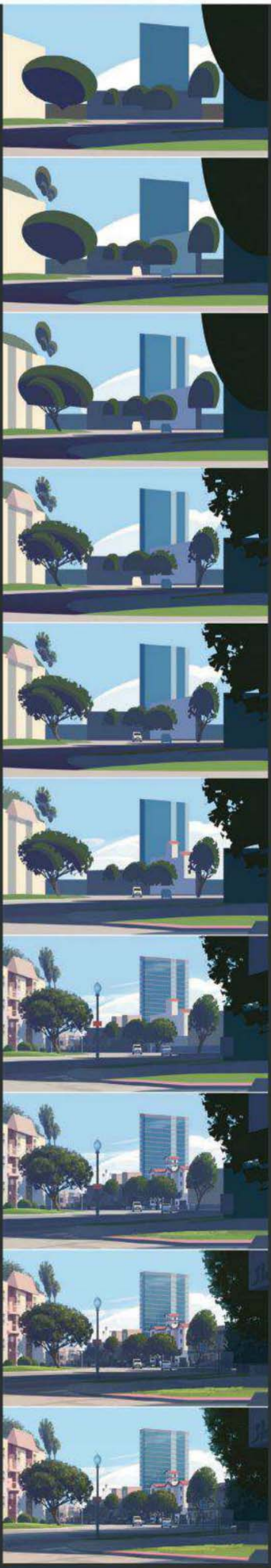
www.bit.ly/dp_realism

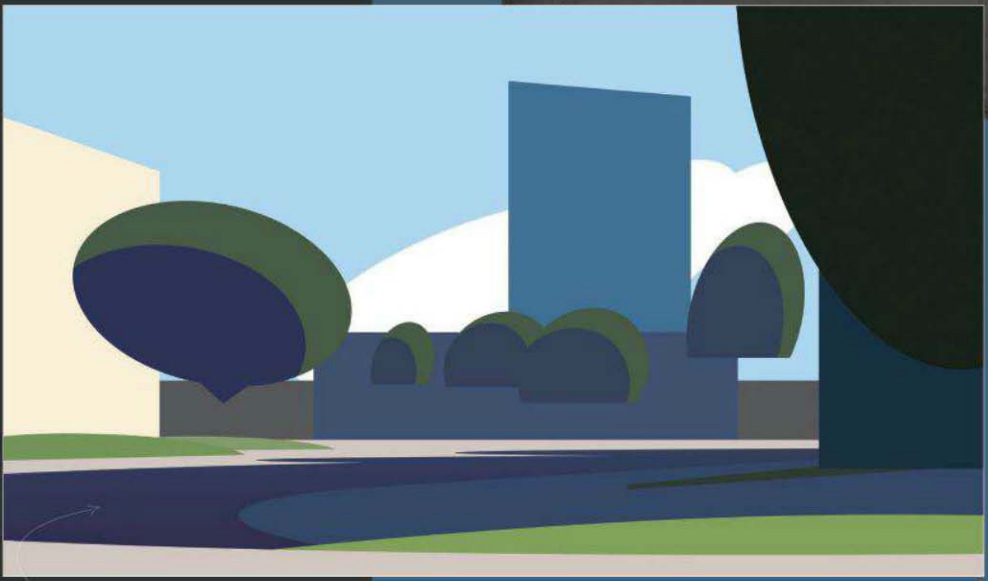
As a young kid I was always looking for a 'how to' book on realism. Whenever I came across a book with the word 'realism' in the title I always thumbed through it hoping it would contain the secret to what I was searching for. Unfortunately the books never quite contained what I was after.

It took several schools, a lot of reading and a lot of mistakes before I was able to figure out what 'realism' means to me.

Here's a few ideas that I have found absolutely invaluable to making good art. It's important to think about the content of your work before technique. Focus first on what you're trying to accomplish before you work out how to do it.

> “It took several schools, a lot of reading and a lot of mistakes before I was able to figure out what 'realism' means to me”





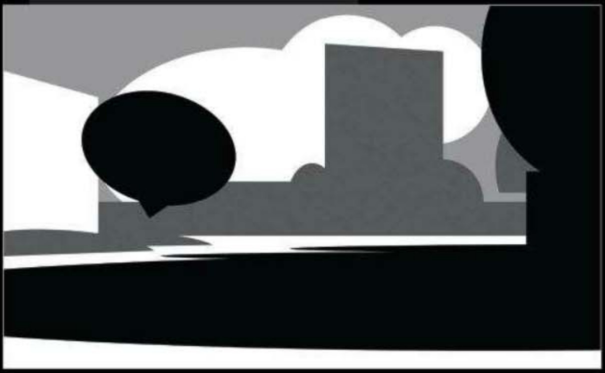
1 VALUE RELATIONSHIPS

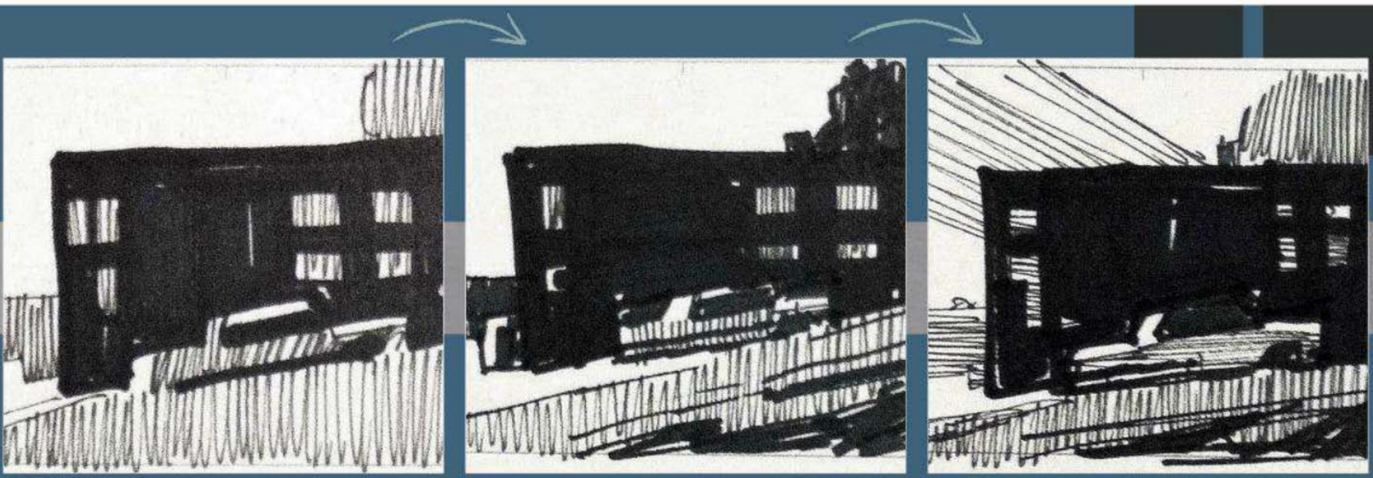
For me, 'realism' is primarily holding true to those big value relationships. If you can get those right and correctly relating to each other, the implied illusion carries much more believability than poorly executed, over-wrought detail. Of course, there's nothing wrong with 'detail' but the illusion of reality is carried through the value relationships. So think, 'how does this tone compare to the one next to it?'

> "If you get the big value relationships right, it carries much more believability than over-wrought detail"

2 MOSTLY LIGHT OR MOSTLY DARK

Good design is clear, simple and readable. There is nothing worse than a tonal pattern that is evenly divided between light and dark. The 70-30 per cent rule, using 70 per cent either dark or light and the other for 30 per cent, is good in that it makes the composition mostly dark or mostly light. This makes you have to plan what you are going to do and actually sketch out and design your idea. ➸



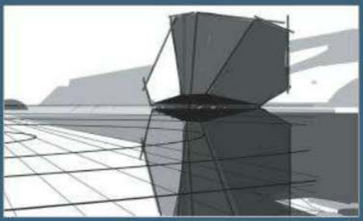


3 DESIGN

Lately I've been making small sketches in a marker before I start a painting to see if, frankly, there's an idea worth pursuing. If your idea can't be boiled down into its fewest values and still communicate your intention, then it's not a very strong idea. Get this right before spending hours on something that wasn't working to begin with.

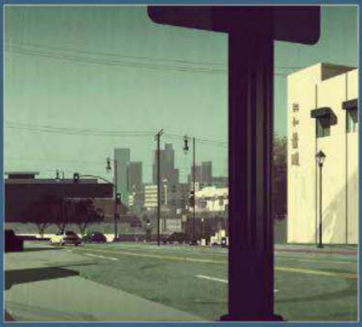
4 PERSPECTIVE

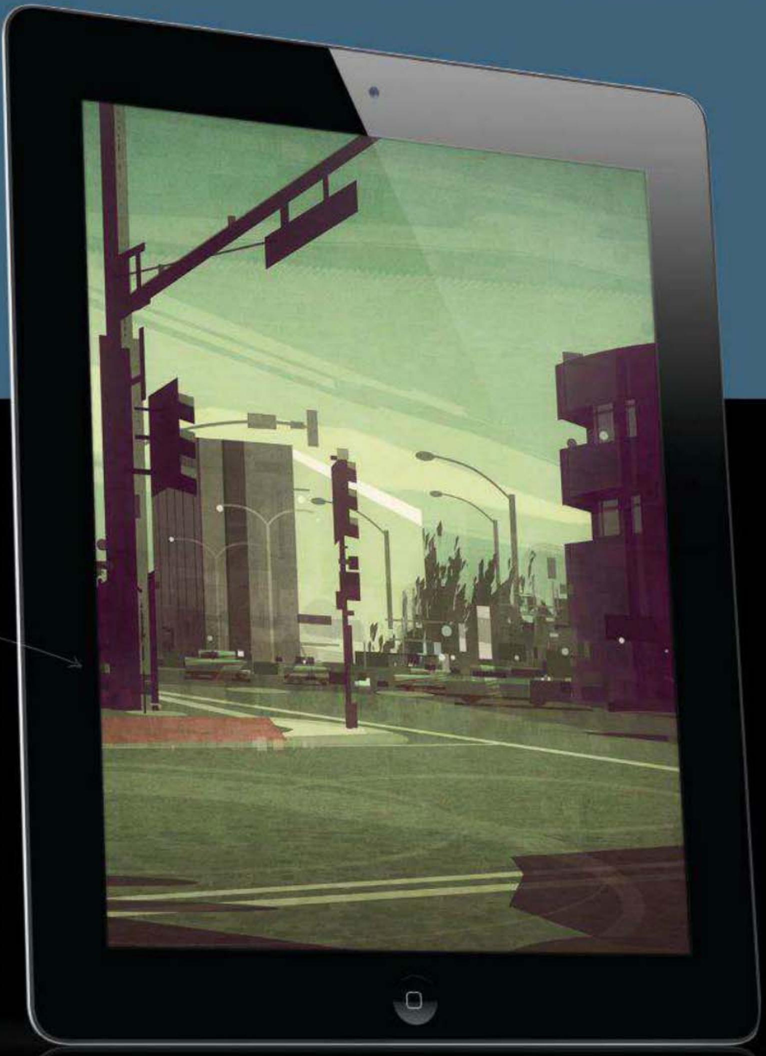
And not just linear perspective. Everything in the image relates to the eyeline. Everything in the picture has volume. Even if you're depicting it flatly, what's the shape? Are you under it or looking down on it? If you don't understand the volume you're drawing then how can you make real choices on how to paint it?



6 BUSY VS SIMPLE

Nothing is worse (okay, maybe a few things are) than a picture that's got every square inch filled to maximum capacity. Really? It's like a friend that can't stop talking. A good picture, like music, has variety. The eye needs to rest somewhere to know what's important.





> “A good picture, like music has variety. The eye needs to rest somewhere to know what's important”

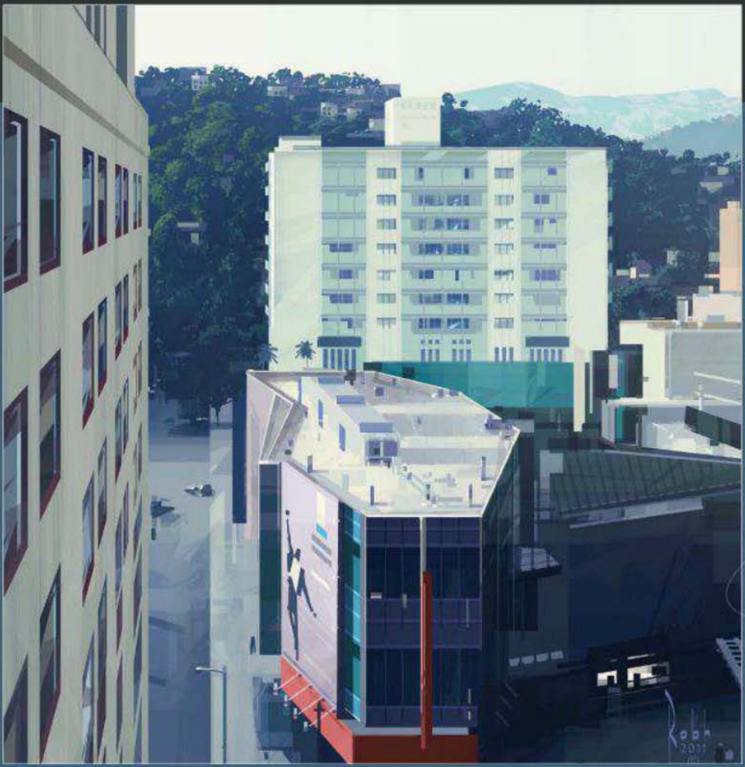
PRO SECRETS

More with less

What are the absolute essentials of the scene you need to understand and still have it represent what's there in front of you. Spend more time looking at what's going on and less wrist movement. Art is always a translation of reality.

5 SIGHT TO SIZE

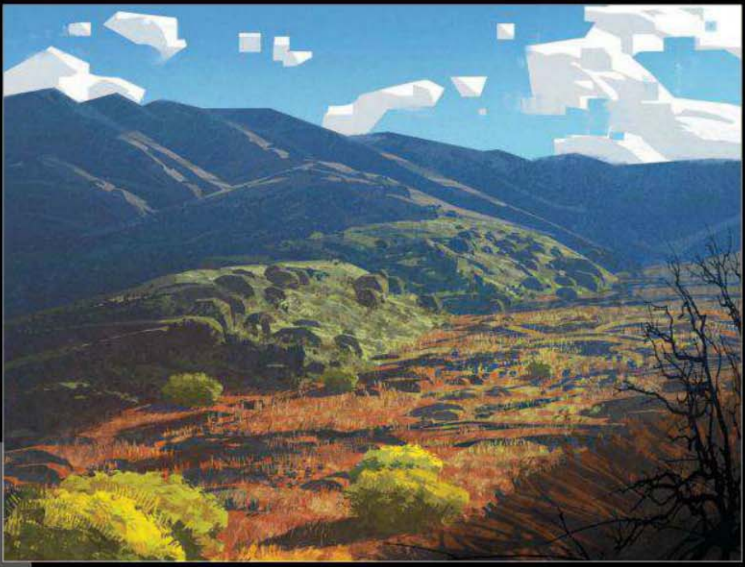
One advantage to working on an iPad is the ability to work sight to size. This means that the image on your screen is directly proportional to what you're looking at. There are a few disadvantages to working this way but tonal accuracy is not one of them. By looking quickly between the two (painting and reality) you can see right away which values are jumping and out of place.

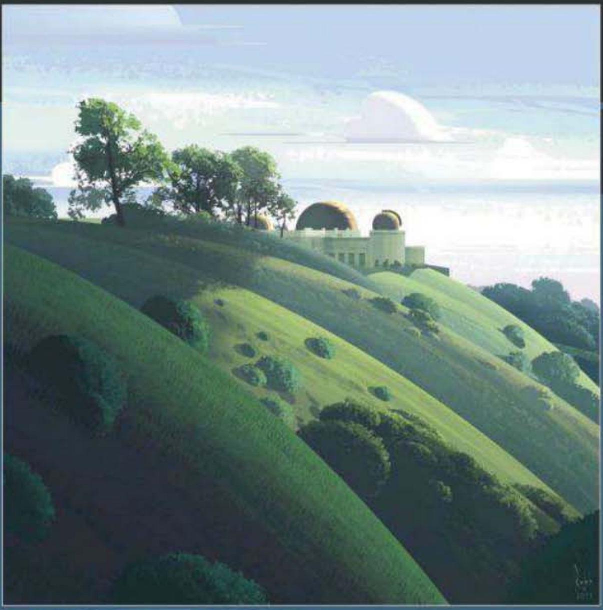


7 CONSISTENT WITH A FEW EXCEPTIONS

A good image needs consistency. A unified look. Consistent mark making. But I have found that within that, a few small, precisely placed areas of well-drawn, sharp detail, whether it's a tree branch or window, will buy you tons of implied detail in the rest of picture. You need to slow down and draw these with care and patience though. Slapped in detail handled the same way you block in the painting, will not do.

> “Leave it alone for a day or so and then come back to it when you're more objective about it. If it looks wrong, fix it. It can be that simple”





8 YOU CAN'T SCHEDULE IN INSPIRATION

But you can make time for it. David Lynch says if you want to get one hour of good painting in you need to have four available. There is another great quote from the composer Philip Glass: “the idea doesn't come unless you're there waiting for it”.

9 THERE'S NO ONE RIGHT WAY

Too often we think we're missing some key piece of information that will make us a great artist, when in fact if we'd just apply what we already know... Don't get hung up on only one way to solve a visual problem. Try out what looks right... to you!

10 MILEAGE

Your own mistakes are your best teachers. So get out there and make some. Hemingway said you should write drunk but edit sober. Make art and then judge it later. Maybe it worked, maybe it didn't. It's hard to judge when you're in the middle of the process. Leave it alone for a day or so and then come back to it when you're more objective about it. If it looks wrong, fix it. It can be that simple.

Made on iPad

Procreate

PAINTING A SCENE FROM LIFE

Have you ever painted in a museum? **Karlsimon** shows how creative use of an iPad in such a place can help feed your imagination...

Painting from life is a big subject to cover in a single article, but in this workshop I'll try to show you one way of sketching that I really enjoy when it's too cold to paint outdoors. I use life painting as a complement to the work I do in the studio. The purpose is not to make pretty pictures but to study reality and I use what I learn for projects I do at home.

With the software available today we artists are a little bit spoiled for tools. Painting from life using traditional media requires more structure and planning, and you need to make each decision count. To me, working on the iPad falls somewhere in between working in Photoshop and working traditionally. The software that's available is basic compared to something like Photoshop, but it's this simplicity that makes it a great tool for life painting. For example, the iPad's lack of pressure sensitivity is, I believe, an advantage. It forces you to make clearer decisions, which results in a more 'direct' painting.

Artist **PROFILE**

Karlsimon

COUNTRY: England

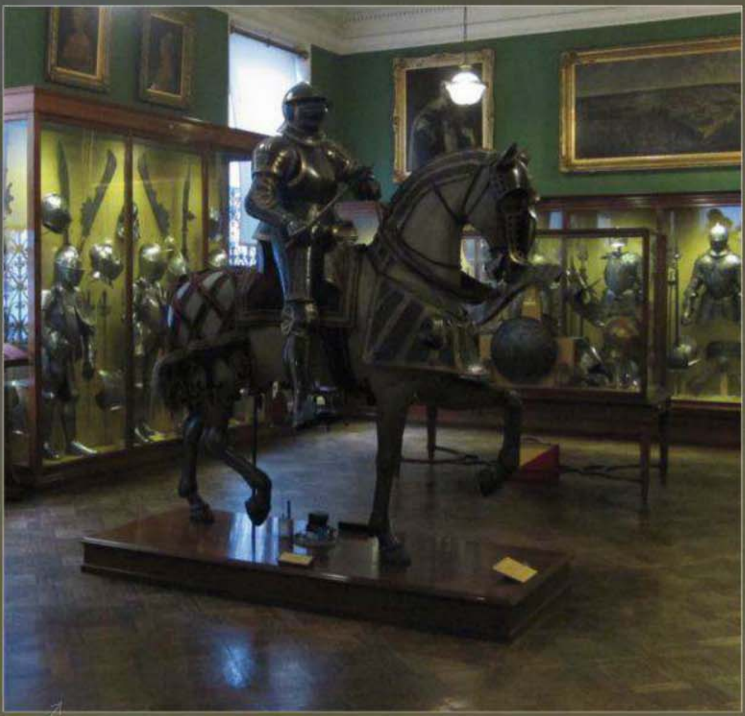
Karlsimon is a Swedish artist living in London. Experienced in both the film and games industries, he's currently doing concepts for VFX company Double Negative. His recent projects have included Captain America and Total Recall.

www.karlsimon.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/dp-knight

Another neat thing about the iPad is that the apps are so cheap. I've tried a few of them including SketchBook Pro and Brushes, but the one I like best so far is Procreate, which I'll be using for this particular workshop.

Yet the greatest advantage of the iPad, Galaxy or any other tablet must be its portability – you can do colour sketches wherever you are! I took my iPad to the Wallace Collection, in the heart of London's West End, to paint some medieval armour. Here's how I got on...



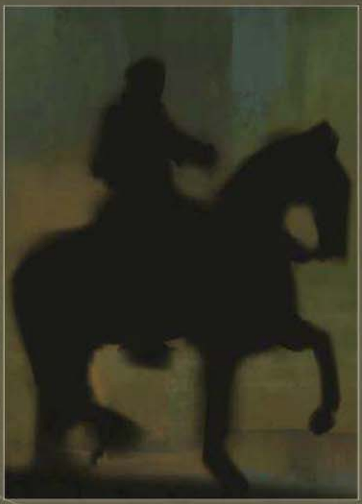
1 Find a composition

Once I've decided what to paint I take a look at it from different angles, trying to find a pleasing composition. Most museums provide stools to sit on so you don't have to stand up or sit on the floor. I settle for a spot where I've placed myself in a position that puts a bright window right behind the head of the knight. This should hopefully give a contrasting focal point to my composition. The lighting in the room is a bit dull, but there's a nice variation of materials so I can probably focus on that.

PRO SECRETS

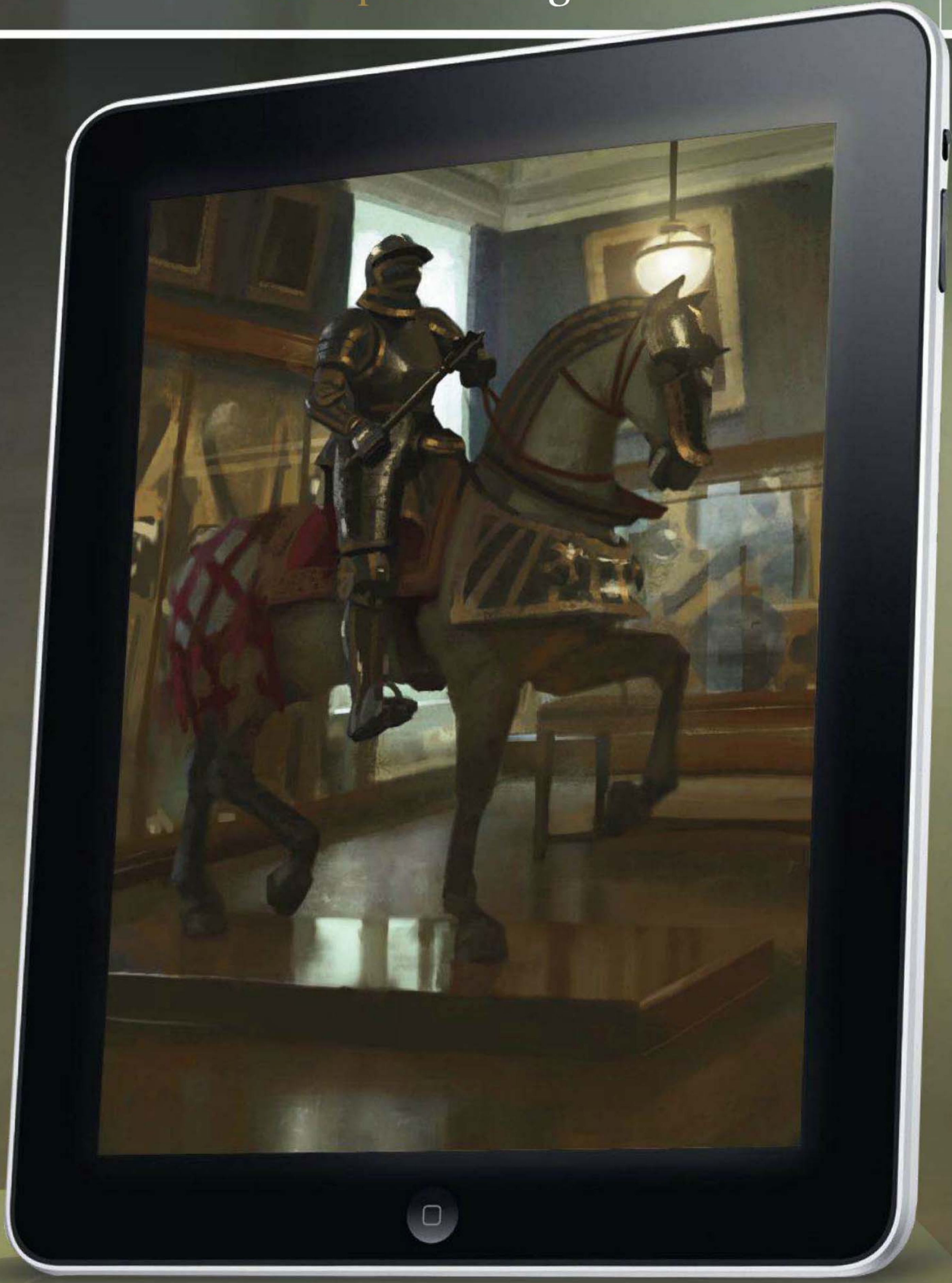
Use your eyes

Squinting helps you see how the big shapes fit together, where the most contrast is and where edges are lost. To see colours clearly, open your eyes.



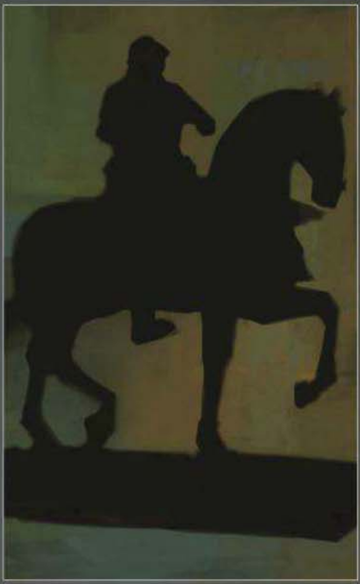
2 Get your canvas wet

First I lay in some background colours, picking values in the lower midtones. I want to create a flat background that has some vibrancy to it. On top of my background, on a new layer, I rough in the shape of my main subject using a soft-edged brush. I make it look ugly almost on purpose, ensuring that I include all the different elements. I then move this shape around, transforming it to see how it'll fit into the composition. I start painting in a landscape format, but then realise that this image will probably look better as a portrait.



3 Measure the proportions

Once I'm happy with the shape and its size on the canvas, I start assessing its various components. What I'm trying to do is make sure things are correctly placed relative to each other; I'm attempting to see the three-dimensional shape that I can paint. When I paint this big shape, I'm toggling between the Brush tool and the Eraser tool. This leaves me with a clean shape that I can later lock as a mask. As I grow more confident that things are in proportion, I slowly work towards a sharper-edged silhouette.



4 Draw the background with shapes

The foreground shape helps me to measure and compare the sizes of the shapes in the background. If things don't add up, there's probably something wrong with the foreground shape, so I jump back to it every now and then to make alterations or corrections. I pay particularly close attention to the perspective of the walls and floor, trying to capture the right depth by accurately measuring the size of the shapes further back in the room.

5 Greater perspective

Even though I try to be as precise as I can, I'm not happy with the perspective. To help me along, I load in a grid as a Multiply layer to make sure all the lines go to the correct vanishing points. This is a great help, but I always try to paint without the grid first, for practice. Once these initial steps are done, what I end up with is essentially a drawing. Not a conventional line drawing, but a drawing made up of shapes of flat paint. From here I can move on to the next stage of my creative endeavour.

PRO SECRETS

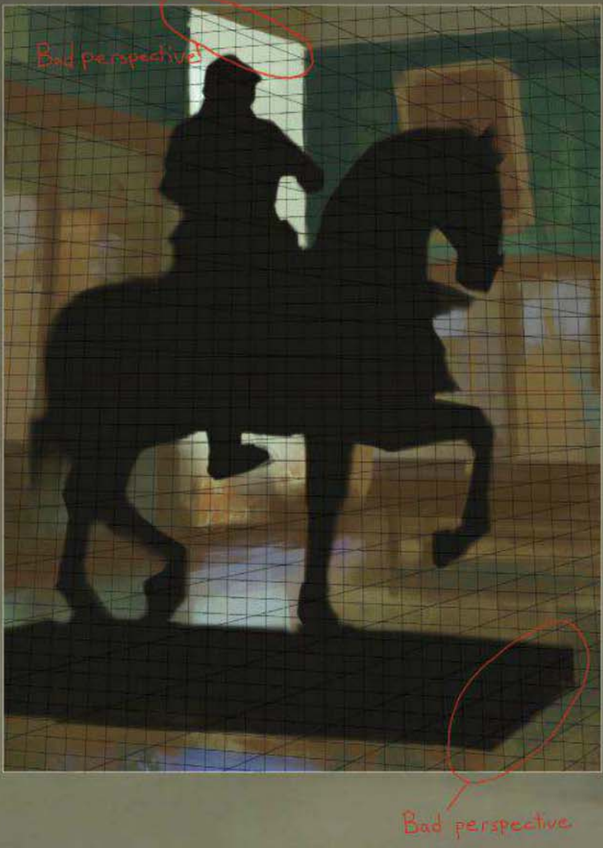
Stylish stylus

There are many styluses out there but I found the best one for me is the Wacom Bamboo stylus. It has a metal shaft around the tip that you can unscrew to achieve better drawing angles.

PRO SECRETS

Sketch for real

Bring an actual sketchpad with you, too. Do a drawing in it, take a picture with the iPad's camera, then colour it in.



6 Lock alpha pixels

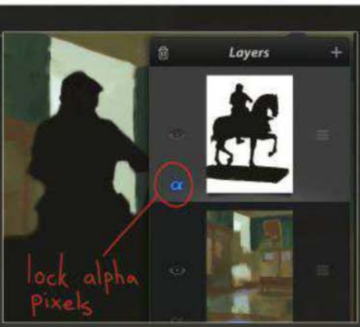
One of the great advantages of digital tools is the possibility to create masks. There's no Selection tool or Layer Masks in Procreate, but I work around this by locking the pixels I've painted so that they become their own mask. It's the same thing that Photoshop calls Lock Transparent Pixels. Simply click the alpha symbol on any layer and you'll lock its pixels.

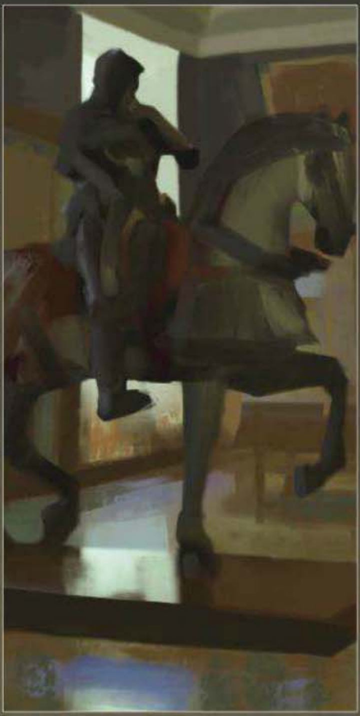
7 Model the form

After locking the foreground, I pick a big brush and blob in some colours. I use brushes that have semi-transparency and smudgy characteristics. Still keeping things soft, I'm trying to show the form with some subtle differences between cold and warm areas. I look around the room, noting which lights are present. I also try to take note of how the lights affect the colour temperature of the shadows. The green walls don't look particularly nice to me, so I decide to redecorate and paint them grey instead. So far so good!

8 Light considerations

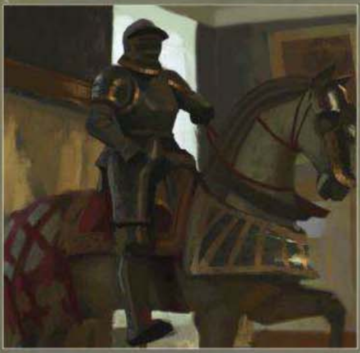
There's a window off to the left that hits the rear of the horse and knight with a cool blue light, but it's diffused by a blind, so there are no sharp shadows. There's also a lot of warm light coming from the ceiling lamps from various directions. So we end up with a top to bottom, warm diffuse light and a left to right, cold diffuse light.

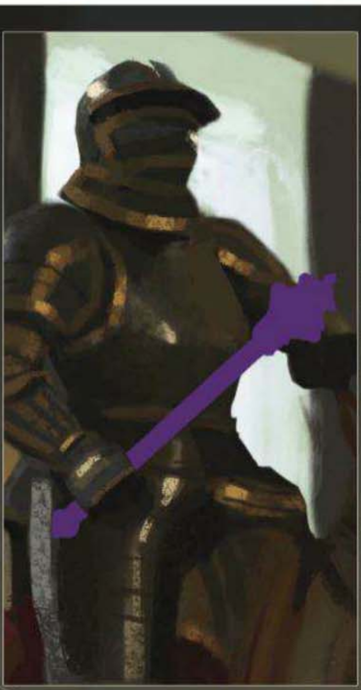




9 Describe materials

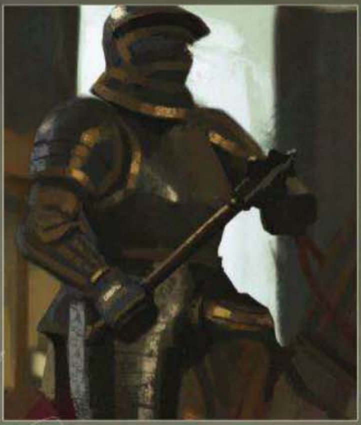
I try to play up the differences in the materials, painting the velvet cloth at the back of the horse with very soft brush strokes, contrasting this with the sharp, edgy look of the armour on the horse's chest. When painting up the different surfaces like this I tend to jump between foreground and background, painting whatever draws my attention. This way I can slowly build up the focus where I want it. When reflections and edges look too sharp or bright, I use the Smudge tool with a scatter brush assigned to it, to soften the paint strokes.





10 Mask important details

There's a lot of overlapping going on around the knight so I decide to paint the mace he's holding separately. To help me see what I'm doing I paint it in a strong contrasting colour at full opacity. Up until this point I've hardly zoomed in at all. Staying zoomed out helps me see the bigger picture, but sometimes the brushstrokes just aren't accurate enough so I zoom in to make sure things end up in the right place.



11 Colour the mask

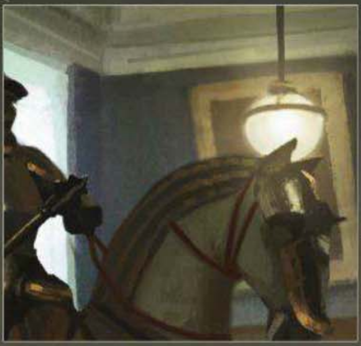
Once again, when I'm happy with the shape of the mace, I lock the layer and colour it in. To make the knight's hand read a little better, I broaden the reflection on the leg armour behind the hand.

12 Bring life to the background

After working up the foreground, the background starts to look plain. I paint the cabinets behind the knight on a separate layer. To make the foreground pop out I make sure no edges in the background are too sharp, but I still try to describe the shapes as accurately as possible. I pay close attention to the window's dull reflection across the floor, remembering to bring out the sharp contrast as it reflects in the plinth.

13 Add atmosphere

To make the horse and rider stand out a little, I add some lighting effects. Using a large brush I rough in some dark blue paint on a new layer set to Add. Then I smudge this paint with a Scatter brush until I produce a pleasing, textured gradient. I use the same process to create a glow for the ceiling light, but this time I put it in front of the horse's head to create a sort of flare.



14 Glass reflections

These can be tricky to get right so again I do them on a separate layer. I paint an opaque shape, lock it, and give it some texture and colour variation. It takes a little while to get a shape that looks satisfactory.

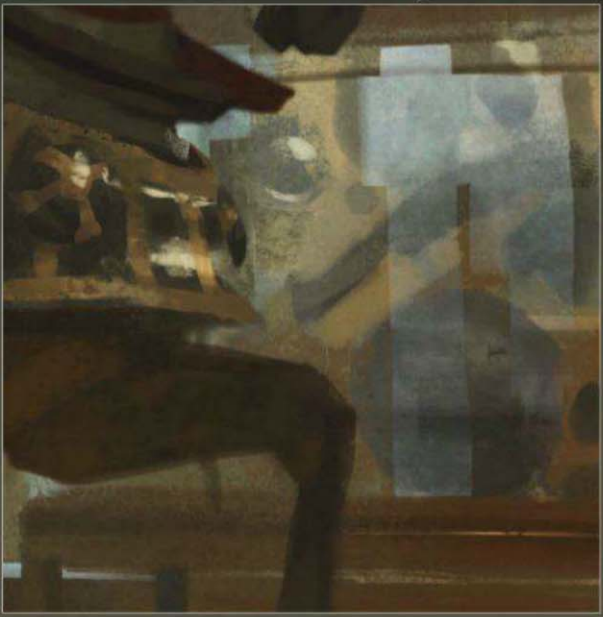
PRO SECRETS

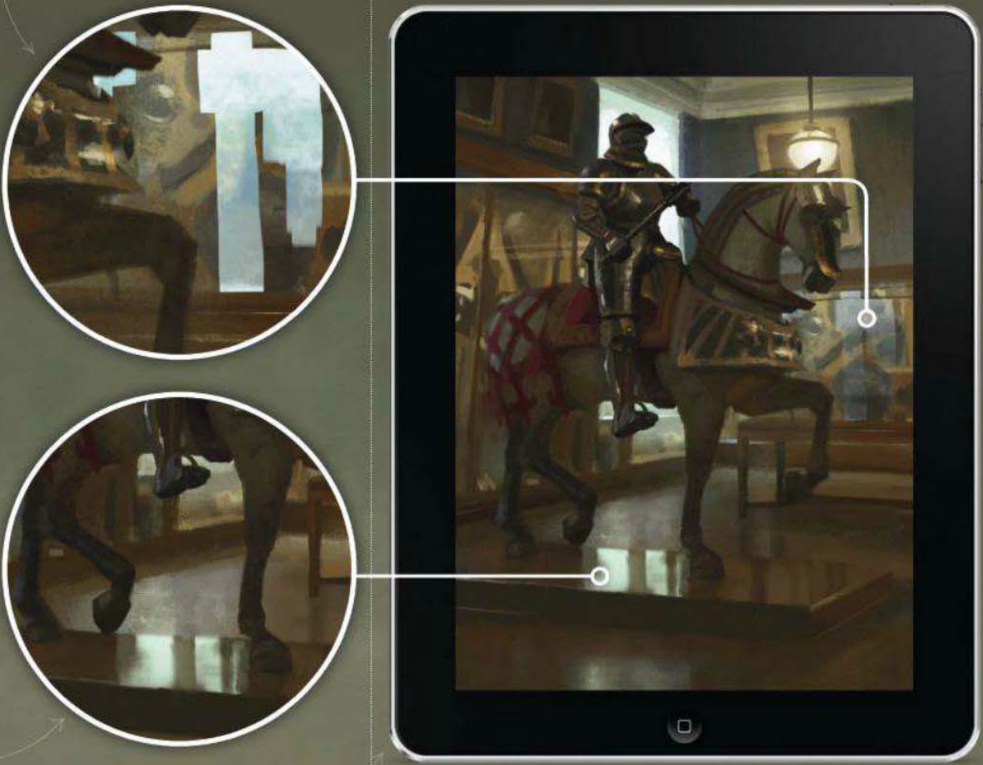
Charge it up

Make sure that the iPad is fully charged before you go out. Seriously, I've forgotten this loads of times!

15 Balancing reflections

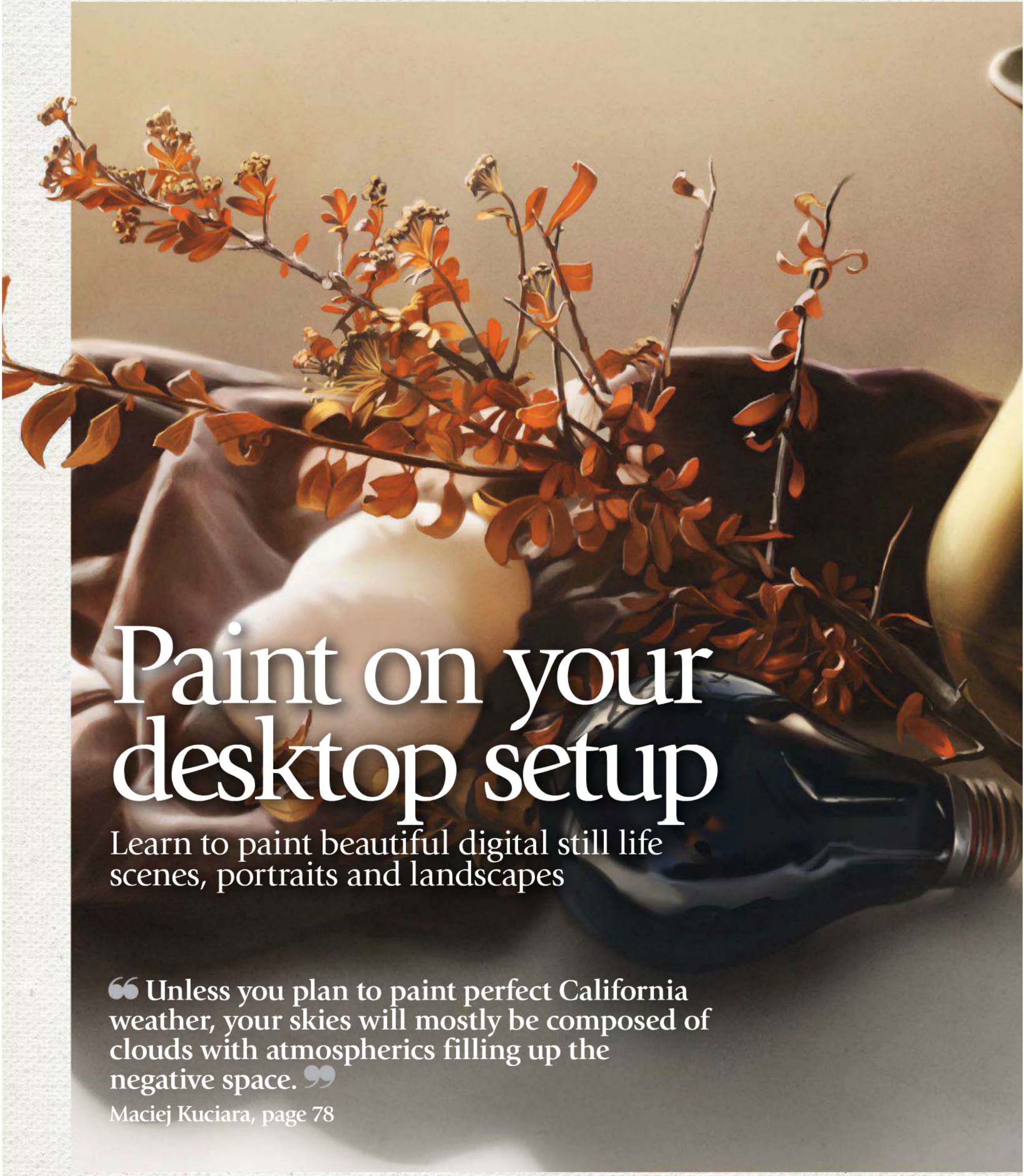
When the reflected shape looks just about right I use the Eraser on a very low opacity to carefully reveal what's behind it.





16 Final touches

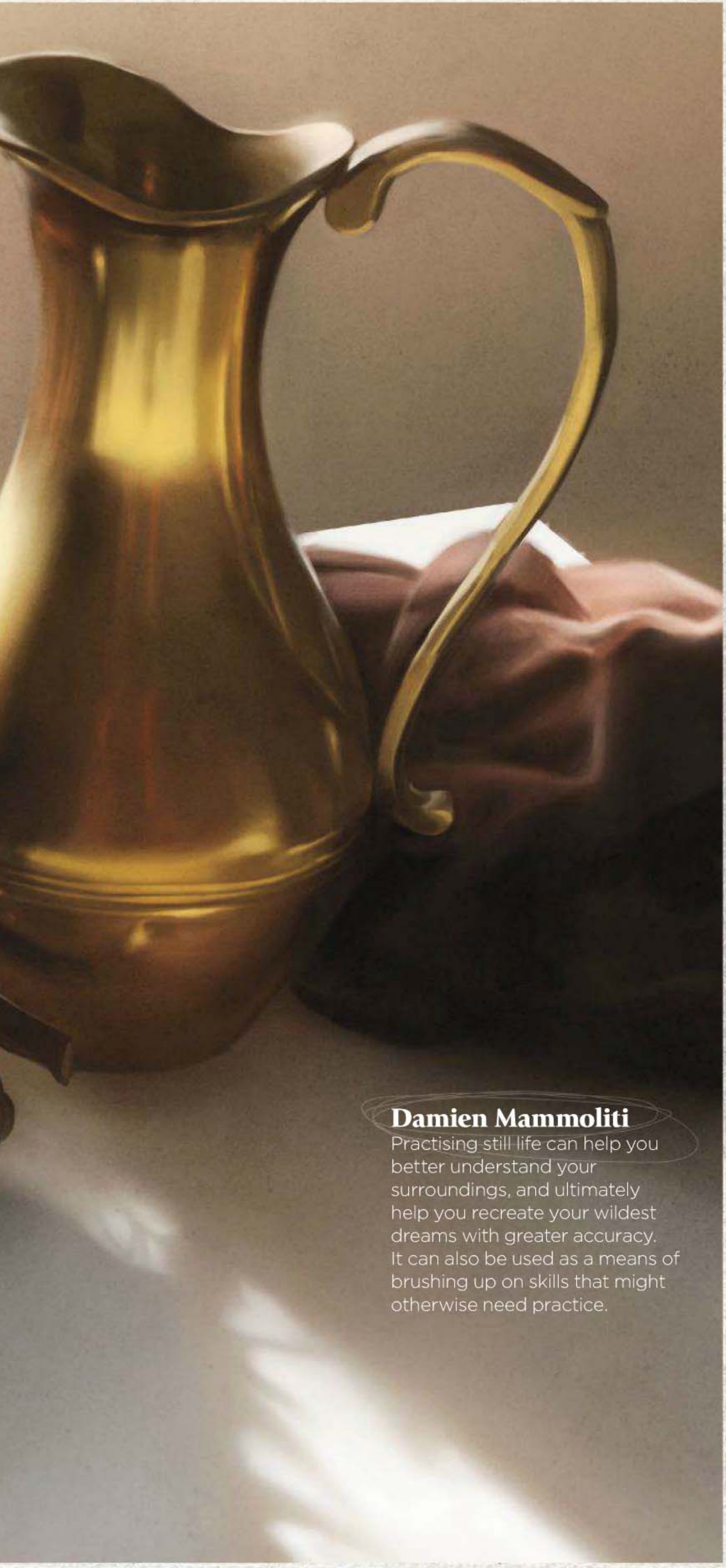
I have a tendency to paint a bit dark with not enough contrast, so after I finish a sketch I sometimes open it in Photoshop to crank things up with a Curves or Levels adjustment layer. One nice feature of Procreate is that you can export PSDs if you do want to implement specific tweaks to certain layers.



Paint on your desktop setup

Learn to paint beautiful digital still life scenes, portraits and landscapes

> “Unless you plan to paint perfect California weather, your skies will mostly be composed of clouds with atmospherics filling up the negative space.”
>
> Maciej Kuciara, page 78



Damien Mammoliti
Practising still life can help you better understand your surroundings, and ultimately help you recreate your wildest dreams with greater accuracy. It can also be used as a means of brushing up on skills that might otherwise need practice.

WORKSHOPS

Seven essential guides to painting digitally using traditional methods

74 Painting a beach scene
Shaddy Safadi uses his plein air knowledge to paint from reference in the comfort of his studio

78 Create lifelike clouds
Whether you're painting storms or sun bleached vistas, learn the tricks to rendering realistic clouds

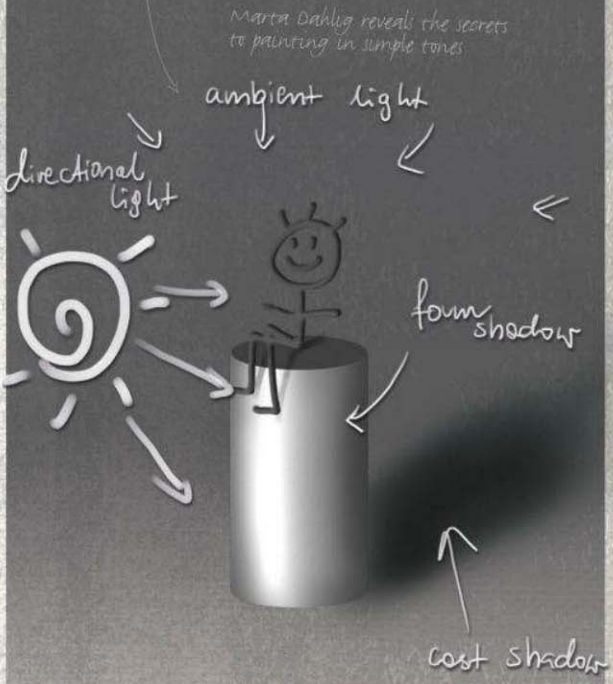
82 Paint a realistic female portrait
Discover how to blend skin and stay loose when working digitally

88 Paint successful still life scenes
Improve your approach to material and light by painting from life

94 Depict clothes and materials
Discover how to paint everything from satin to silk and metal armour

100 Paint greyscale images with ease
Marta Dahlig reveals how to paint in simple black and white tones

104 Painting bright and airy interiors
Work with perspective paint simple materials for accomplished interiors


Marta Dahlig reveals the secrets to painting in simple tones
ambient light
directional light
form shadow
cast shadow

Artist **PROFILE**

Shaddy Safadi
COUNTRY: US

Shaddy has spent more than 10 years working with top video game developers such as Naughty Dog and Bungie. He now heads up a new concept studio in Santa Monica.
www.bit.ly/safadi

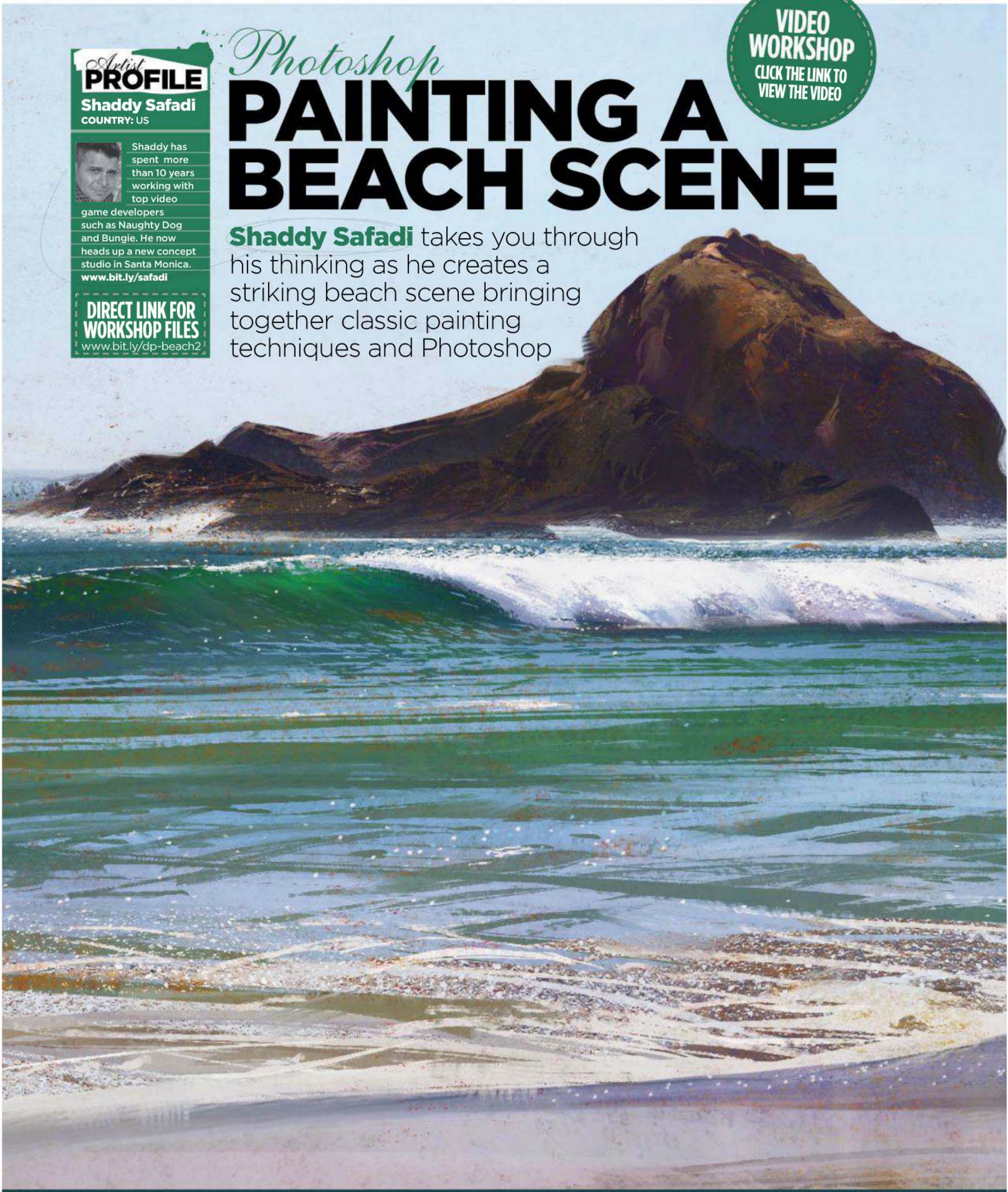
DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/dp-beach2

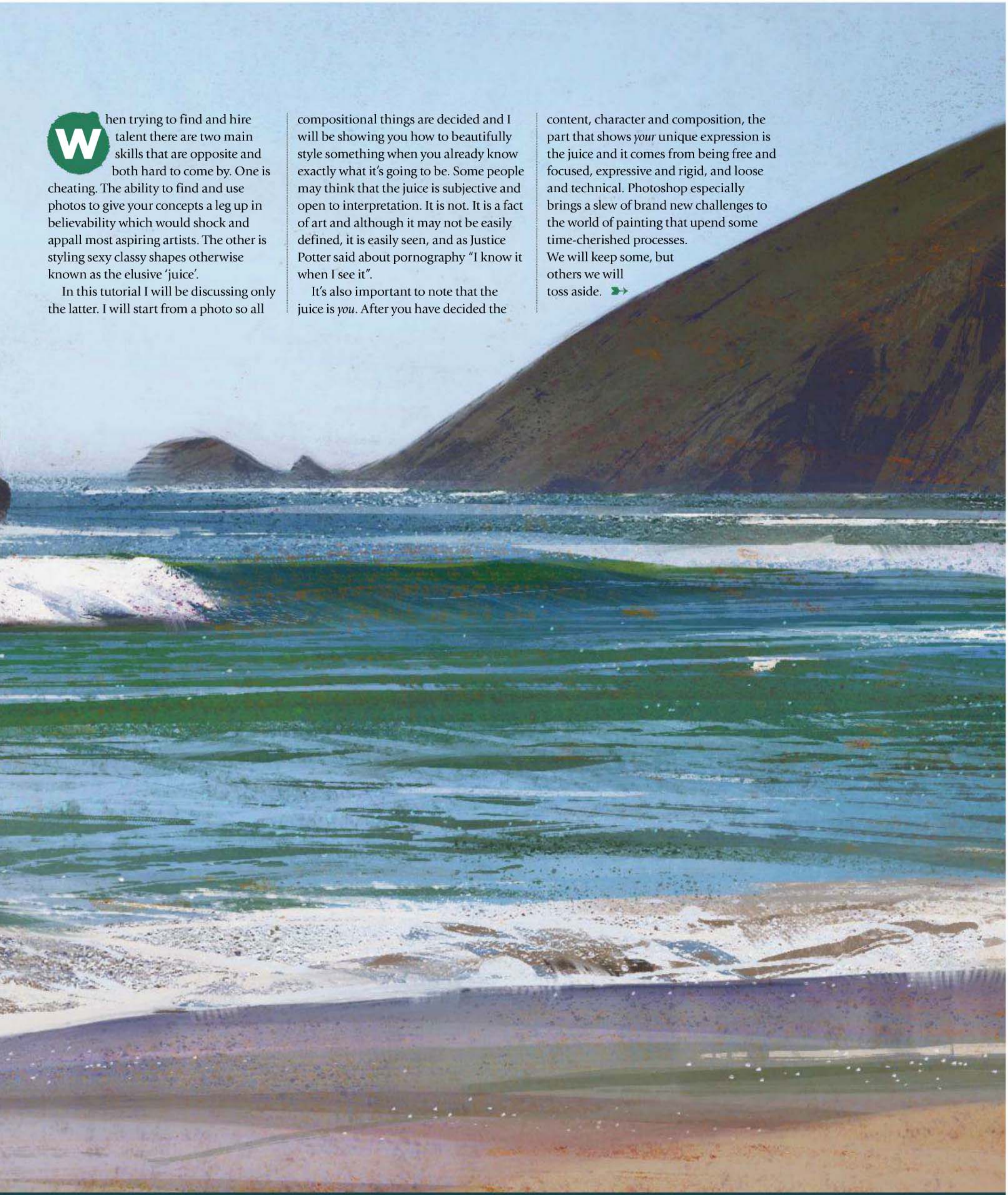
Photoshop

PAINTING A BEACH SCENE

VIDEO WORKSHOP
CLICK THE LINK TO VIEW THE VIDEO

Shaddy Safadi takes you through his thinking as he creates a striking beach scene bringing together classic painting techniques and Photoshop

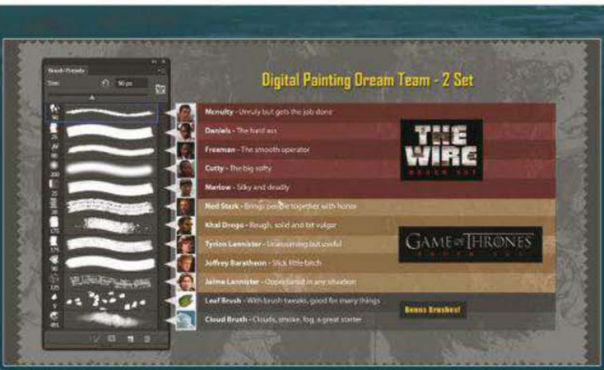




When trying to find and hire talent there are two main skills that are opposite and both hard to come by. One is cheating. The ability to find and use photos to give your concepts a leg up in believability which would shock and appall most aspiring artists. The other is styling sexy classy shapes otherwise known as the elusive 'juice'.

In this tutorial I will be discussing only the latter. I will start from a photo so all compositional things are decided and I will be showing you how to beautifully style something when you already know exactly what it's going to be. Some people may think that the juice is subjective and open to interpretation. It is not. It is a fact of art and although it may not be easily defined, it is easily seen, and as Justice Potter said about pornography "I know it when I see it".

It's also important to note that the juice is *you*. After you have decided the content, character and composition, the part that shows *your* unique expression is the juice and it comes from being free and focused, expressive and rigid, and loose and technical. Photoshop especially brings a slew of brand new challenges to the world of painting that upend some time-cherished processes. We will keep some, but others we will toss aside.



Digital Painting Dream Team - 2 Set

Mcnulty - Unruly but gets the job done
Daniels - The hard ass
Freeman - The smooth operator
Cutty - The big softy
Marlow - Silky and deadly
Ned Stark - Brings people together with honor
Khal Drogo - Rough, solid and bit vulger
Tyrion Lannister - Unassuming but useful
Joffrey Baratheon - Slick little bitch
Jaime Lannister - Opportunist in any situation
Leaf Brush - With brush tweaks, good for many things
Cloud Brush - Clouds, smoke, fog, a great starter

1 Brushes are critical

Often the way teachers keep you down is by not giving you the tools you need to replicate their work, telling you it's not about techniques but rather the 'fundamentals'. Well of course fundamentals are important but so are the tools. Just as a racing car driver needs a well tuned car, you need the right equipment. These brushes are named cutely but the purpose is serious. Install them, test them and try to use only these brushes for a few weeks. These are the winners from years of pairing down, the real workhorse brushes that give the most expression for the least amount of effort. They're on your disc.

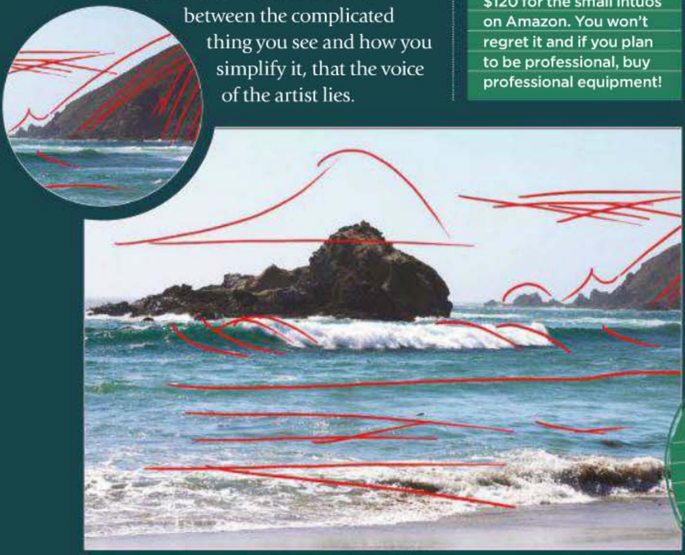
2 Look at the picture, look at it… No seriously, look at it!

Ok we're ready to start painting let's just start scribbling in some gest- STOP… Look at the picture you are referencing. *Really* look at it. Examine it. See it. You will notice all kinds of things if you fend off the fear of doing a poor painting for one second and bathe in nature's splendour. In this case, notice the rhythms and movements. What does the water tend to do in this picture? It tends to be horizontal. What does the back mountain tend to do? It tends to be diagonal and swoop down at a 45 degree angle, but then the side rock tends to swoop at a steeper angle. Notice the overall shape of the middle rock? What is the simplest you can make it? The courage to take something complicated and express it simply is the foundation of capturing the 'juice'. It is in that translation between the complicated thing you see and how you simplify it, that the voice of the artist lies.

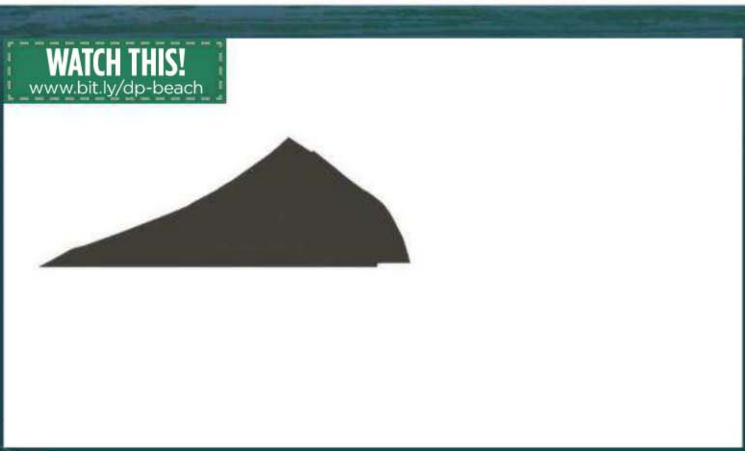
PRO SECRETS

Setting up your tablet

Set up your Intuot tablet, 3, 4, or 5, or your Cintiq by following the instructions on the yellow 'Brushes' tab on my site www.shaddyconceptart.com. There is a page that has detailed instructions and I believe this work flow is the most efficient for fast painting. If you have a Bamboo or Graphire that doesn't have buttons give it to your little brother and spend $120 for the small intuos on Amazon. You won't regret it and if you plan to be professional, buy professional equipment!

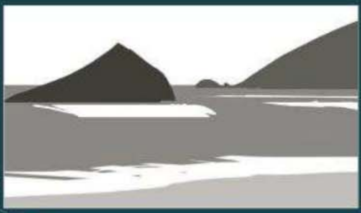


WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/dp-beach



3 The Blind Samurai

In one of the best Anime films of all time, Ninja Scroll, a Blind Samurai runs through bamboo listening for when he should strike and every slash is swift and definitive. That's how your mark making should be. Many students see something with detailed shapes like the central rock and become scared they are going to mess it up or that it's not going to "look like it's supposed to". In that mindset every painting they do is on the defensive constantly fighting back their own fear so they never put any mark down with authority. Now most people get confidence in mark making over years of practice and gradually build up to it. Well you can do it *now*. You looked at it in Step 2, you know what the essence is, now (using the Daniels brush) block in and erase out a strong shape. Often it's the erasing out of Daniels that gives you the sexy shapes because Daniels has a clumsy end. I try to never let the hanging end of Daniels go untrimmed.

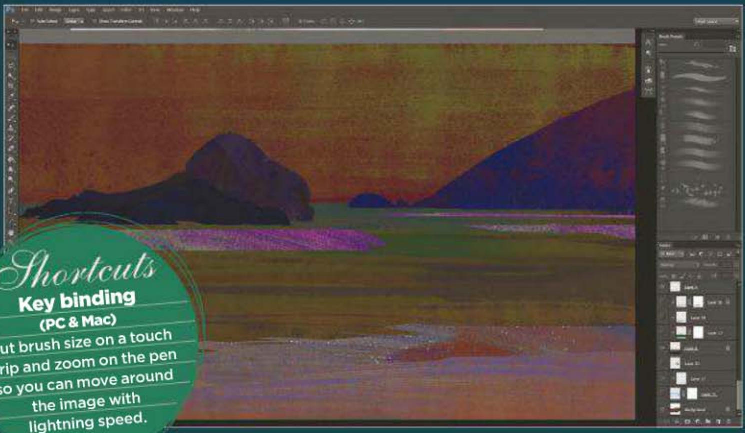


4 Flat blacks and greys

Stick with Daniels and block out everything on separate layers. Keep Undo as a handy hotkey. I'm about an hour in at this point, thinking about each shape and crafting it. In addition to the hotkey for undo, the brush size is always on the touch strip, never the pen, so I can vary it instantly to sharpen up the small shapes. This phase looks rough but I will not leave this step until each shape is final. At the end I may finesse them a tiny bit but you have to trust your instinct and leave the strong shapes you initially felt out.

5 Some fun allowed

We are finally ready to party a little and add some colour. A technique that I borrowed from traditional painting is to do an underpainting, but since every major element is on a separate layer we must do each layer separately. The trick is to make the underpainting a vivid version of the shadow colour you sense in that layer. So if a rock is brownish but I sense some blue in the shadows, I'll make the underpainting a super saturated mix of bluish purples but still tune them to the actual image. If the back mountains are bluer than the close ones, I'll make the underpainting bluer. In this case the sky is blue, so I'll counter it with a mix of orangey colours using the brushes Jaime Lannister, Tyrion Lannister , and Khal Drogo. It takes courage to look at your painting at this stage, but stay calm – this opposite colouring will pay off.



Shortcuts
Key binding
(PC & Mac)
Put brush size on a touch strip and zoom on the pen so you can move around the image with lightning speed.

6 Clipping masks

If you don't know about clipping masks, welcome to the beginning of the rest of your life. The basic concept is to paint on top of a given layer, with your marks constrained to the perimeter of the layer below it. It's as simple as holding the alt key while hovering your mouse between two layers and then clicking. The layer on top is now 'clipped' to the layer below it. You can make whatever marks you want on the top layer without it affecting the main layer, and you can have as many clipping masks as you want! In this image I throw down a temporary light blue backdrop to give my eyes respite from the colour madness, and start working on the main rock, as at the beginning, trying to style a strong sexy shape that still reads as that object. I'm painting in and erasing out with Marlow and the greatest brush of all McNulty.

8 The heavy lifting

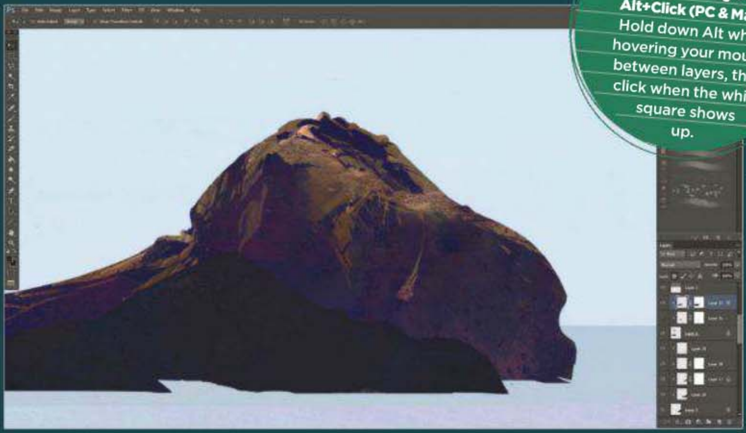
All the ground work is done, now it's time to actually do the painting. I add a sky on top of my orange mess, leaving bits of the underpainting showing through and using the brush Cutty and also some Tyrion Lannister to add texture. I got the idea from the Jaime Jones painting that even if something is soft like clouds, it still needs some tooth to keep texture consistent. The back mountain and the water have their first passes using the same technique as on the main rock, adding a clipping mask layer, then painting a dynamic shape that captures the essence of that element. I notice the water has a criss cross shape so I use the brush McNulty to express that. Switching to Khal Drogo for the far back water helps to describe the texture here more accurately.

Shortcuts

Clip to layer

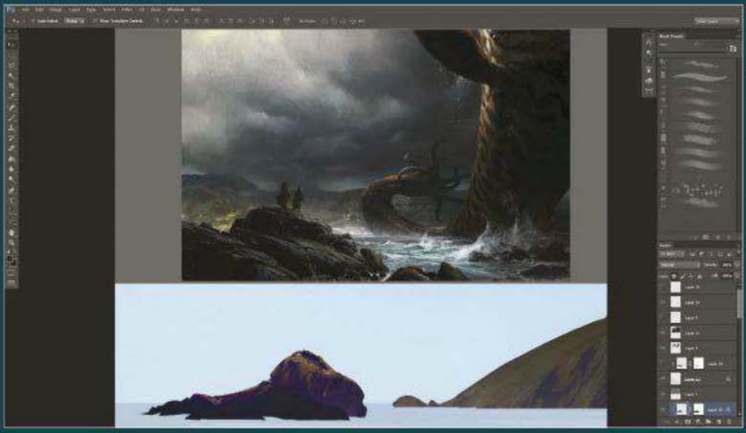
Alt+Click (PC & Mac)

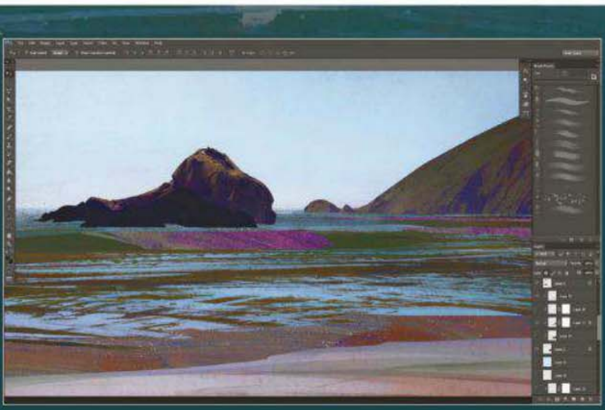
Hold down Alt while hovering your mouse between layers, then click when the white square shows up.

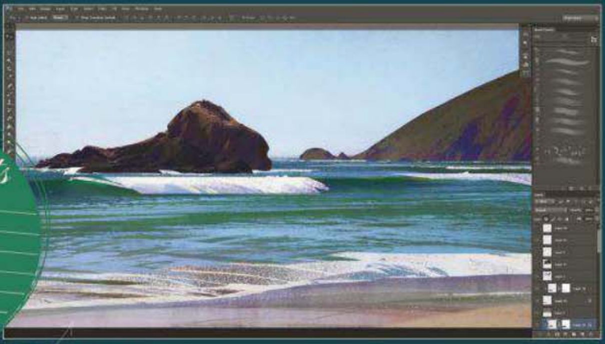


7 Imitation is the sincerest form of getting better

I always try to keep a painting up in my file that has a style that I'm trying to copy. Somebody through years of hard work has found a great balance of brushwork, colour and composition. This Jaime Jones painting is a free road map to success and if you can take a slow deep breath and calm the heck down you may be able to learn something from it. But you don't learn from opening the file, looking at it and closing it, as if it has some sort of spirit that will magically wash over your body. I always keep a painting that I love up the whole time I'm painting – and not a bunch of paintings that will 'influence' me, but just one. If you know you like it, one is enough, and it will give you a huge amount of information about how much detail to add in various areas. Worried about adding too much or too little? See what they did, and do that!







9 Polish

Now you can see how all the underpainting is making a subtle but noticable appearance. Each layer has multiple clipping masks attached to it with colour added. The bottom right sand area is blocked in with the brush Marlow, one of the best for silky blendy painting. After a few passes a Tyrion Lannister adds a bit of tooth unifying the picture a bit. The basic graphic shapes hardly changed at all. Perhaps a few bumps are added here and there, but overall the silhouette has stayed consistent since the initial black and white. The ocean gets a few more clipping mask layers underneath the lightest blue adding greens and dark blues. Near the curve of the wave you can see some Ned Stark set to Mixer Brush tool (in the brush tool menu) which allows for some nice painty blending. In old versions of Photoshop smudge did this job but now I think mixer brush is better. Just a bit goes a long way.

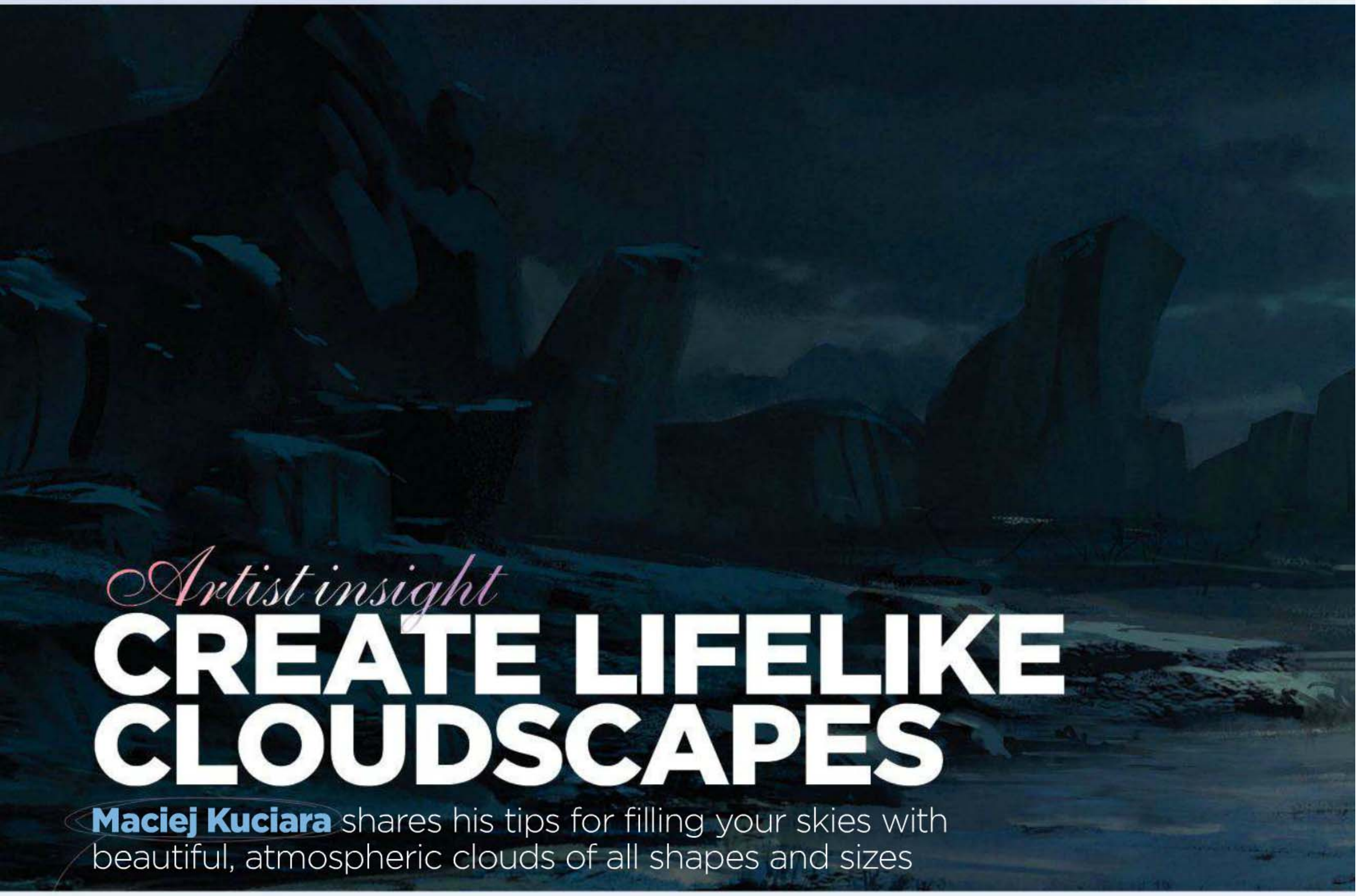
PRO SECRETS

Start this workshop now

In trying to learn a new technique like this don't try to "work elements of it into your process". Assuming you like the final painting, drop whatever you are currently doing and do this. If you're worried that you're own personal style won't show through, don't be. You are still doing it so it will automatically have your personal style. The logic is if you like something 100 per cent then try to copy it 100 per cent and if you don't like it 100 per cent then find somebody else's work that you like and copy that!

10 Finishing touches

Even though the image in Step 9 and the final painting on page 74 look very similar there is about two hours of work just in the finishing touches. Notice all the subtle differences. Without getting too crazy I add some froth to the wave, some Khal Drogo to the foreground frothy foam and slight gradients coming up from the rocks to help them 'sit' in the environment. You'll also notice the finished image has some bits of orange speckled about that Step 9 doesn't have which is due to a bright orange layer that I put over the whole piece and mask out using a layer mask. I then erase back in with Khal Drogo using the lightest touch just to get a feel for the underpainting showing through. Another fun tip is to create a new layer, fill it with 50 per cent grey, add a grain filter to it, set it to 25 per cent and Overlay layer mode. This will give your painting an ever so slightly photographic feel by mimicking the grain seen in photos.



Artist insight

CREATE LIFELIKE CLOUDSCAPES

Maciej Kuciara shares his tips for filling your skies with beautiful, atmospheric clouds of all shapes and sizes

Artist **PROFILE**

Maciej Kuciara

COUNTRY: Poland

Maciej is a concept artist involved in the video game, film and TV industries. Having worked at Crytek on the Crysis series, he now works for Naughty Dog in California.

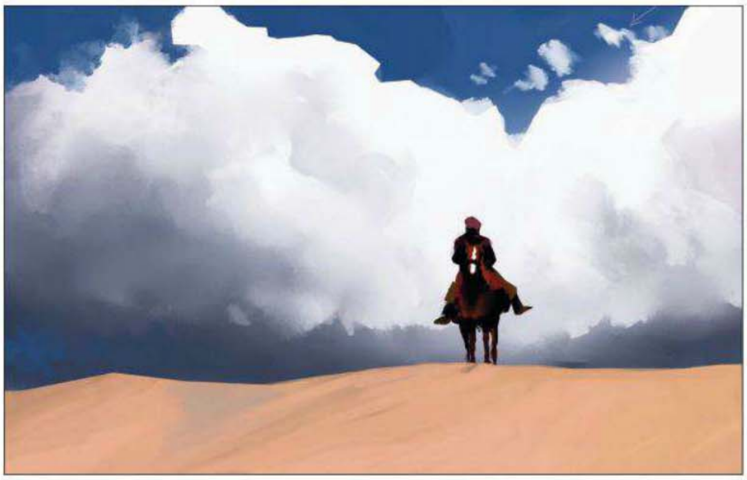
maciejkuciara.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES

www.bit.ly/dp-clouds

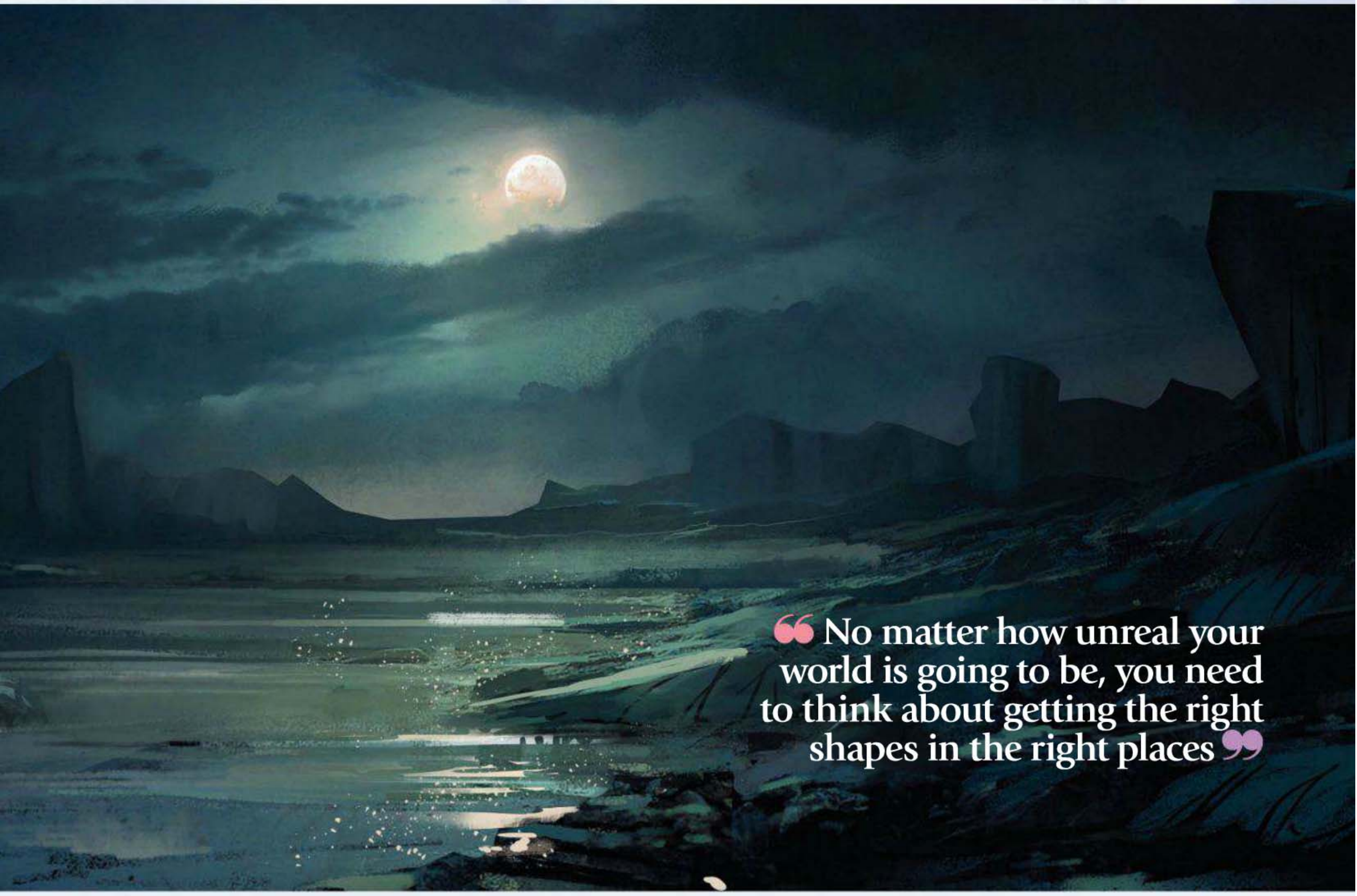
Over the years you'll rise to the challenge of many different types of concepts and paintings, and some of those will almost certainly require part of your canvas to be filled with sky and clouds. You might even find yourself painting dramatic-looking cumulus being split by trails of propeller fighters!

Whatever it's going to be, the sky will most likely be a major light source for your image. Unless you plan to paint perfect California weather, your skies will mostly be composed of clouds with atmospherics filling up the negative space. To help you to populate your skies with dramatic, fluffy and sweeping cloud formations, I've compiled these painting tips that will enable you to define interesting lighting and support the story behind your picture.

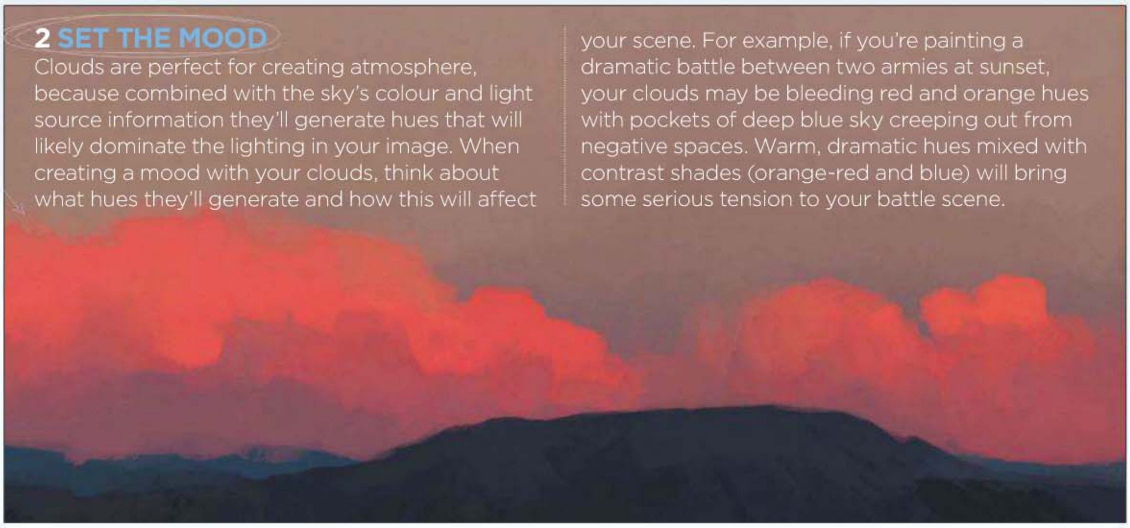


1 CONSIDER THE COMPOSITION

Think of clouds as an element of composition and make sure that they always support your foreground story. For example, you might want to use big, bright cumulus shapes placed behind the main character in your scene to contrast him with the background. This will draw him out from the scenery and make that part of your image more eye-catching. Clouds can take almost any shape known to man, which means they can be the perfect tool to frame your background elements and support the composition.



> No matter how unreal your world is going to be, you need to think about getting the right shapes in the right places



2 SET THE MOOD

Clouds are perfect for creating atmosphere, because combined with the sky's colour and light source information they'll generate hues that will likely dominate the lighting in your image. When creating a mood with your clouds, think about what hues they'll generate and how this will affect your scene. For example, if you're painting a dramatic battle between two armies at sunset, your clouds may be bleeding red and orange hues with pockets of deep blue sky creeping out from negative spaces. Warm, dramatic hues mixed with contrast shades (orange-red and blue) will bring some serious tension to your battle scene.

PRO SECRETS

Brush tips

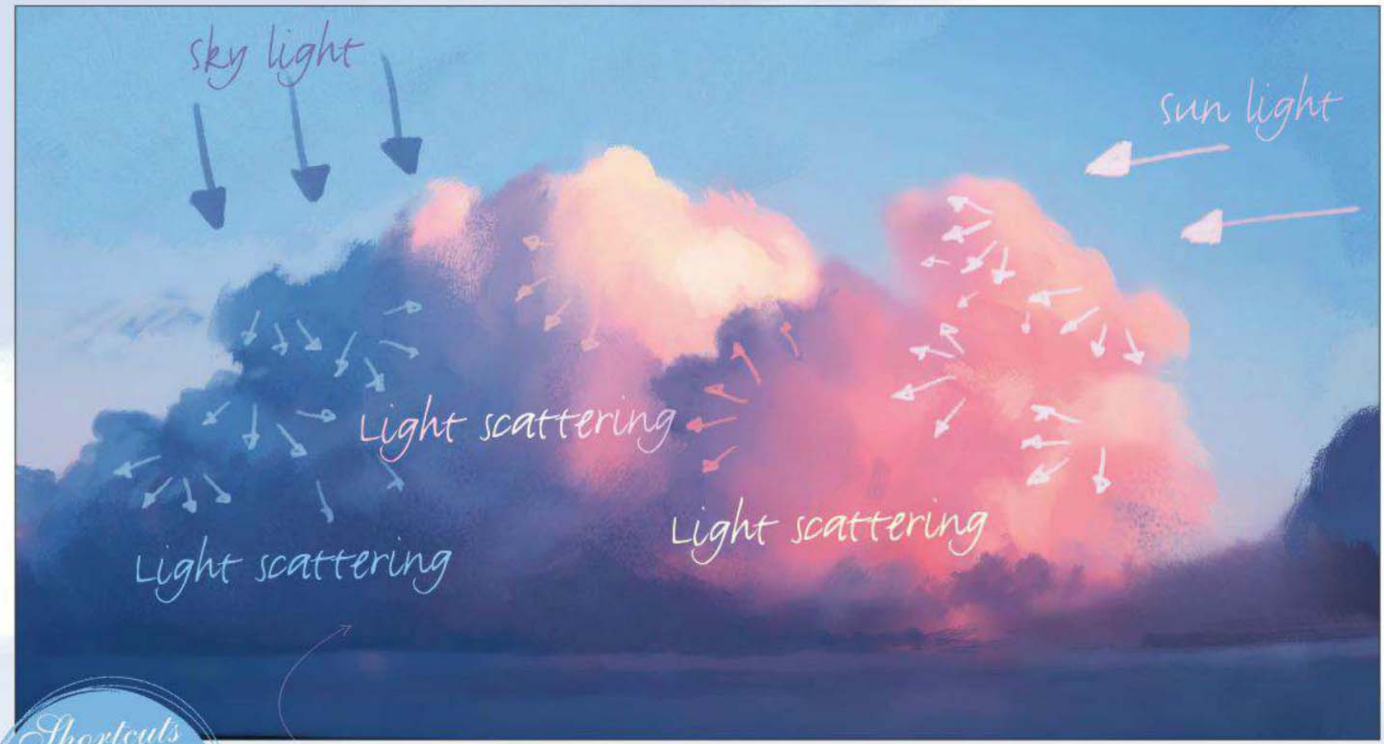
Try using Round Simple brushes to define the shapes of your clouds, then adjust the Softness slider to 0 per cent and paint in rough shadows and highlights. This will give you a nice base from which to work in some custom brush magic.

3 KNOW YOUR CLOUD TYPES

When you construct a painting, no matter how unreal your world is going to be, you always need to think about getting the right shapes in the right places. The same principle is true for clouds. If you paint cumulus clouds and then make them rain, your image will immediately feel odd. The human eye is used to the shapes of clouds and associates them with specific weather conditions. Your viewers will spot any discrepancies right away.

4 THINK ABOUT THE STORY

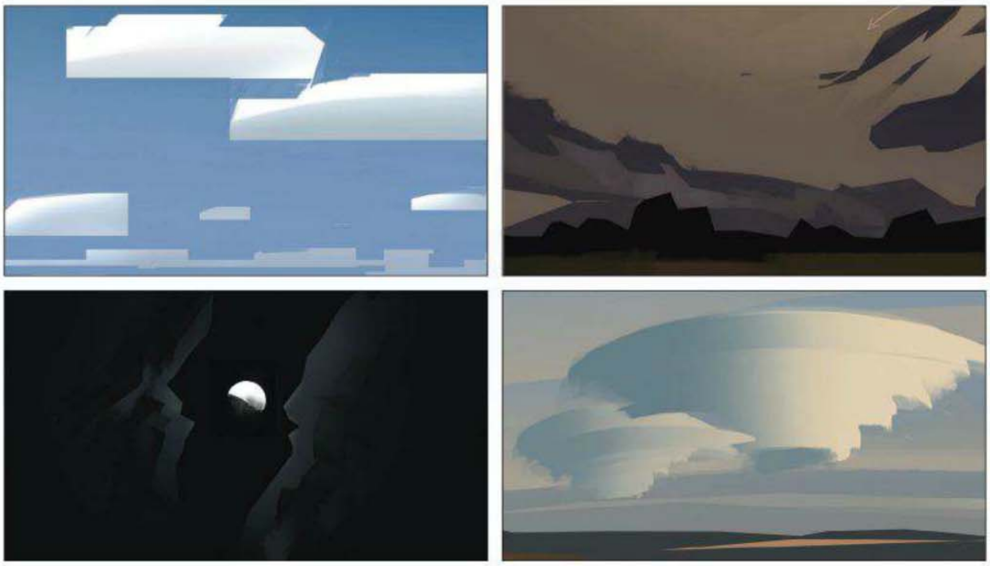
Using the correct cloud types in your image may help to build the background for the tale that you want to tell. Whenever I paint concept art, I try to use everything on my canvas to support the story I'm creating. I do the same thing with clouds. In fairytale images, I might want to use fluffy cumulus clouds, for example. If my goal is to show upcoming danger, I'll try to go with cumulonimbus, while cold and scary moments can be achieved with stratus clouds, and so on. Let your choice of sky help to sell the story.



Shortcuts
Flip Canvas Horizontal
Custom shortcut
Try key-binding Flip Canvas Horizontal and using it to expose any errors in composition.

5 SCATTER THE LIGHT

A cloud is nothing more than a mass of water droplets or ice crystals that are suspended in the air. As a result of their form and structure, clouds are quite translucent and irregularly shaped, and they're usually flat at the bottom. Keeping translucency in mind is important when you try to render clouds, because not only will the light affect the outer surfaces on the mass, but it will also scatter within, creating a different look to what you'd expect from other hard-surfaced materials. When you paint clouds, think of your primary light source and its direction. It's most likely to be light from the sun, moon or even the glow of a city that will light your clouds from below. There's always going to be soft ambient light coming from the sky. Both of those light sources are scattered within the cloud mass and need to be considered.



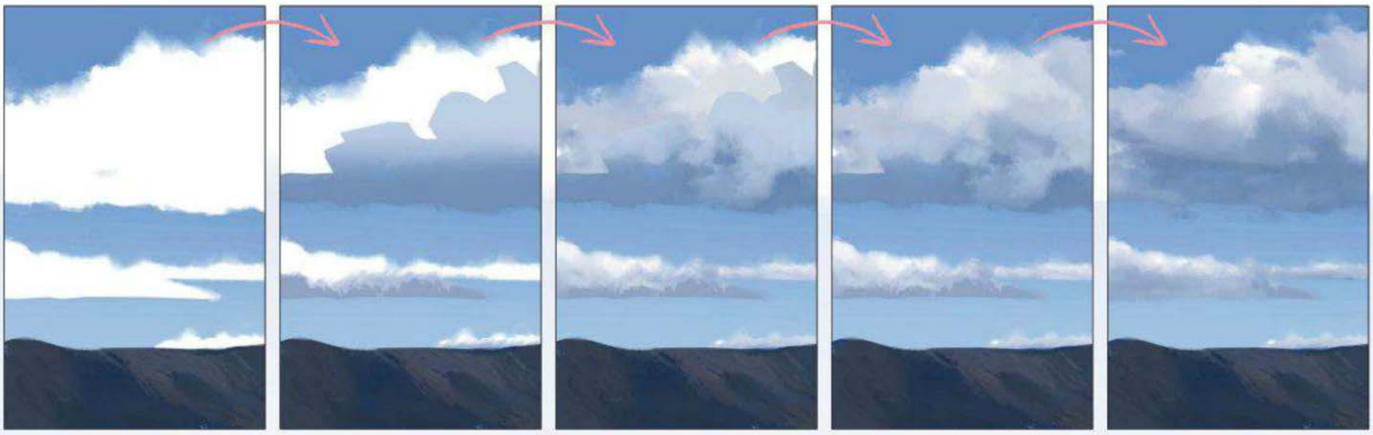
6 CHOOSE RELAXING OR DRAMATIC SHAPES

The shapes you use in your painting can quickly define how dynamic it's going to be. Usually, square and horizontal lines will create a static and pleasant image, while triangles and diagonal lines will increase the intensity. You can use shapes to your advantage and compose your clouds in the image's space to create the desired effect. Your puffy cumulus clouds can be relaxing for the viewer's eye when shaped in a way that supports horizontal lines and squares or, when caught at a dramatic camera angle, they can bring tension to an action sequence. Try out various shapes to see their different effects.

7

There's nothing wrong with using photographs in your paintings as long as you employ them in the correct way. Perhaps the image you want to paint is supposed to be very realistic in its materials and details. In this case, spending endless hours on a pixel-perfect paint will probably be exhausting enough for you to take other, perhaps more important, parts of the image less seriously. If you have a camera, take it on your trips and collect materials. If you decide to use them in your images later on, be sure to go through the checklist below.

- Does the light direction in your photo match the one in your concept? It's never a good idea to use a photo if the lighting doesn't match. It will look wrong and probably hurt your image more than helping it.
- Is it the same time of day and is the lighting mood similar? If the difference in mood and colour is minimal, then you can always adjust the colours. Just remember that making day from night isn't going to work.
- Do the shapes captured in your photo match the ones in your sketch? If not, see if you can use your sketched-out shapes as a Mask layer for parts of the photos and perhaps you can collage the clouds out of them.



8 CHOOSE YOUR TOOLS

Once the initial shapes of my clouds are defined and the idea for the overall mood of the piece is in place, I usually work with the Selection and Gradient tools.

I keep thinking about the 3D form of the cloud mass, and with selections and gradients I sketch out the basic layout of the cloud's shadows. When this stage is complete, I can begin painting in the detail and adding definition.

I start with soft brushes to give the form a little extra highlight and shadow information. Then, with textured and scattered brushes (see 'Experiment with scatter', right), I add the definition and graininess to the image, making the clouds look more lifelike.

> “When I decide to paint clouds, I try to define a range of brushes that will help me to achieve my goals”

9 SWITCH BRUSHES

Try using more than one brush to paint your clouds. When I decide to paint clouds in my images, I try to define a range of brushes that will help me to achieve my goals. Scattered, grainy brushes give interesting texture to the clouds. With the Smudge tool, I make sure that transitions between values and hues are smooth within the shapes. I also like to keep sharp edges in some areas to give an illusion of 3D puffs sticking out from the main mass.

10 ADD ATMOSPHERE

Don't forget atmospheric effects when painting clouds. Haze, mist, rain or even sun rays can affect the way your clouds will be read – such effects will likely decrease the contrast, unify hues and values or even alter them in some cases. Atmospheric effects always add to the realism of my paintings and something as simple as haze can bring extra depth to the image.

PRO SECRETS

Experiment with scatter

Using custom brushes with scatter options can enable you to create interesting effects from the Smudge tool, which will give your images a painterly feel because of the way it blends your colours together. Play around with the different scattering and spacing options and find out which settings work best for your image.

VIDEO WORKSHOP
CLICK THE LINK TO VIEW THE VIDEO

Photoshop

PAINT A REALISTIC FEMALE PORTRAIT

Discover how to paint a female character that's anchored in realism rather than rendered form imagined clichés, with **Marta Dahlig's** help

Realistic female portraits can be tricky to pull off with any degree of success. It's such a popular subject that it's hard to give it your personal touch, never mind finding something new to say on the matter. Whenever you paint, you don't want to do something that's been done thousands of times before. It's important to find the one factor that'll make your painting stand out from the rest.

The purpose of this workshop is to show my take on the subject and the methods I used to overcome the problem of overfamiliarity. I'll take you through the process of preparing the painting and discuss specific art tasks, which are composition, character, lighting modelling and texturing. This time, however, my take on texturing will be slightly different from what you're used to seeing. Because I'll be working with only a few basic brushes, there'll be no need for any fancy photo-texturing tools.

I'll also discuss the elements I want to push to the fore, those that I decide to omit, and how I achieve the most interesting technical effects. Hopefully, it'll give you some insight into how to approach your paintings and identify new ways to freshen it up.

The image was done in Photoshop, but I also have some tips on how to recreate certain textures in Painter. The painting process was recorded and you can find its video on this magazine's disc. Be sure to check it out, because I mention a few extra things in the audio commentary that aren't in the text.

Artist **PROFILE**

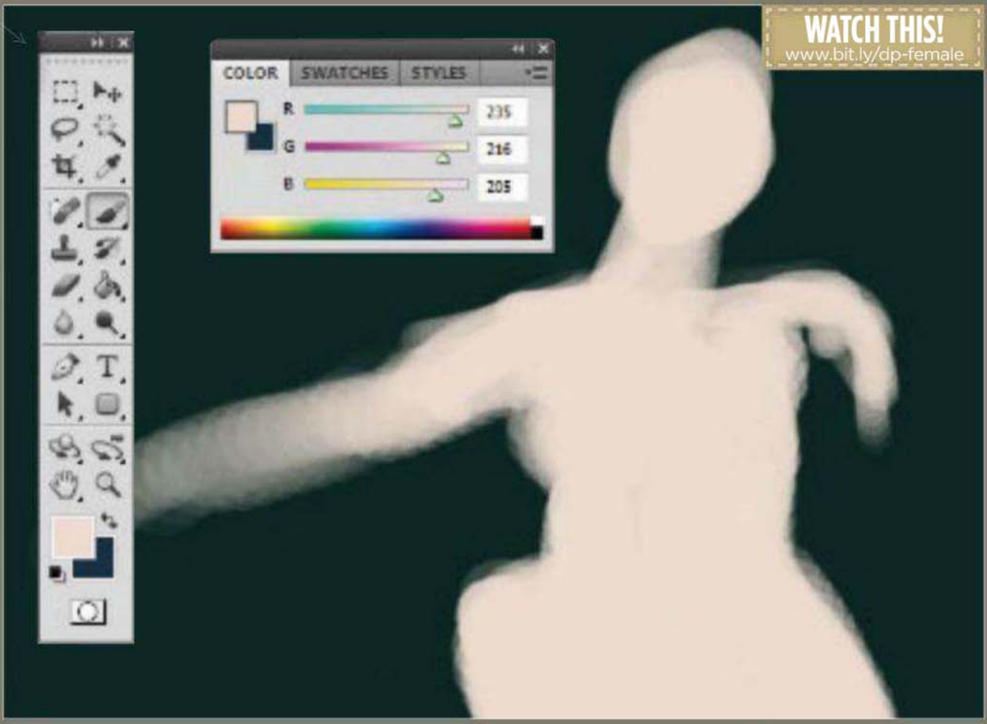
Marta Dahlig
COUNTRY: Poland

Marta's a self-taught artist who's worked for several publishing houses and mobile phone companies.
www.marta-dahlig.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/dp-portrait

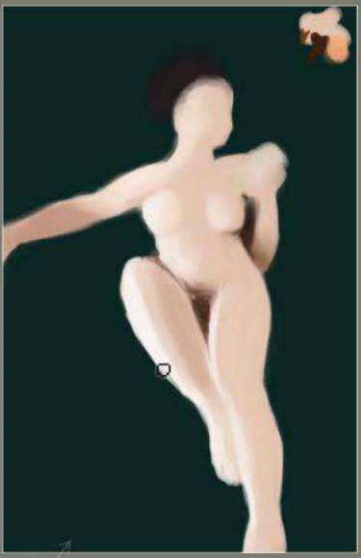
1 A rough start

My general composition idea for the piece is to have a strong contrast between the plain white of the character's body and her rich surroundings. I'll use an intense, painterly lighting to help me underline this difference. I'm absolutely awful when it comes to sketching, and so I start with putting simple blobs of colour with a ragged brush, to get a feeling of the composition and where the various objects lie.



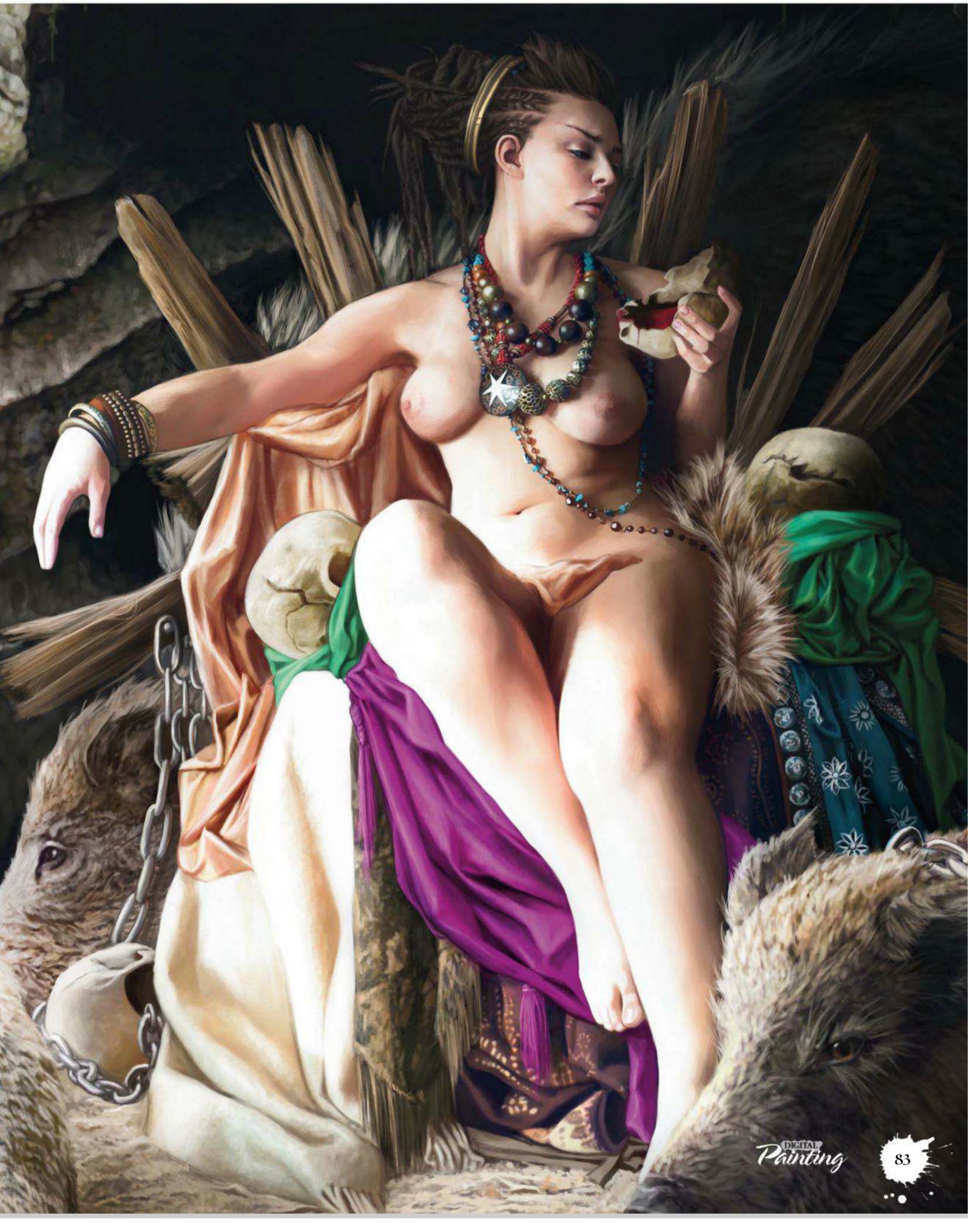
R 235
G 216
B 205

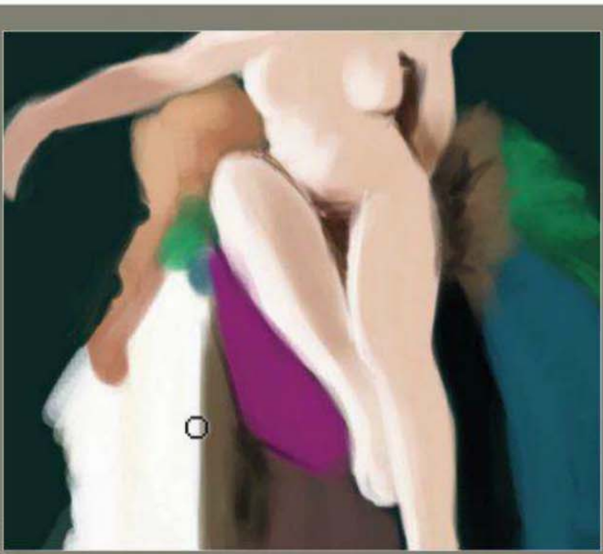
WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/dp-female



2 Filling the space

After preparing a messy layout of the pose, I add colours to the figure using the same brush on a high opacity. One thing you might have noticed is that my character is rather plump. Because the girl is going to be nude, it's important for me not to fall into the "sexy pin-up" trap. If she were slim and athletic, the nudity would probably be too blatant and hackneyed. I want my character to be intense and even attractive, but not in an easy-going way.





3 Playing with light

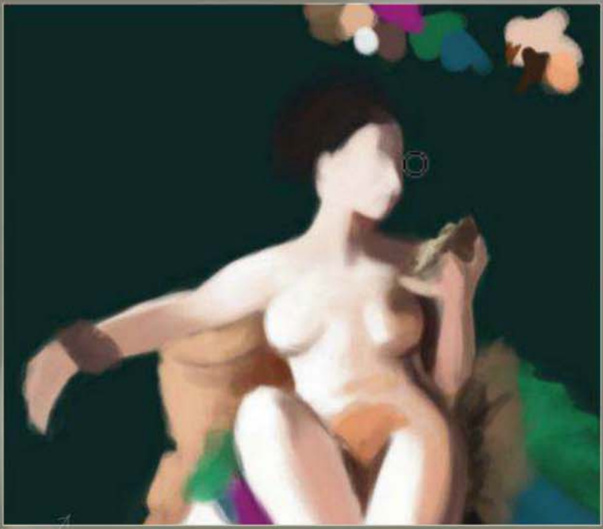
I continue adding more shadows and highlights. Working with a low opacity ragged brush helps me define and change shapes gradually. This approach is especially useful for artists who, like me, tend to be cautious about their strokes at the start of the process. I only have a few predefined colours; for the rest I sample from the transitions I naturally create using the Eyedropper. Even though the shape of the figure didn't really need a reference, I need some help when defining my shades. To achieve the correct nuances of colour, I consult references at **lockstock.deviantart.com**. One trick that I picked up some time ago by viewing this photographer's work is saturating the transition between highlighted and shadowed areas. This helps me underline the effect that light has on the flesh.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

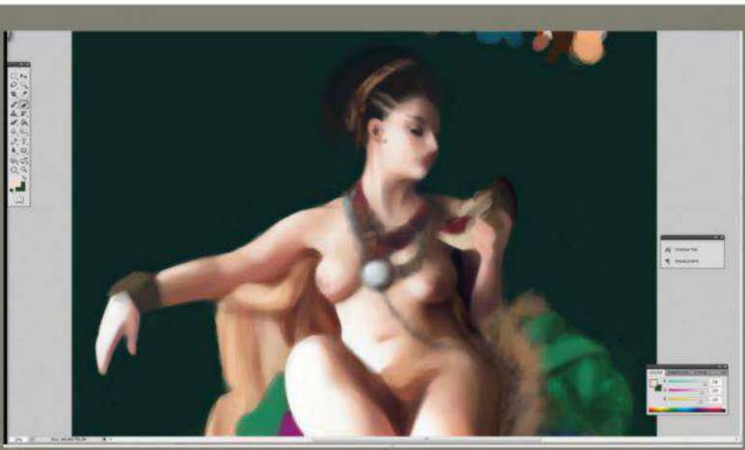
CUSTOM BRUSH
CANVAS BRUSH

I created this brush based on the settings of a traditional brush. It introduces a special "canvas roughness" to an object. It's not really that great for actual painting, but comes into its own when adding a traditional texture.



4 Fleshing out

For compositions like this one, it's the modelling of the character that'll determine the success of the painting. I strengthen the shades by using off-white on the areas of her body that receive the most highlights. Although I'm using the same brush, I work with gradually less opaque and larger diameters to start creating some transitions.

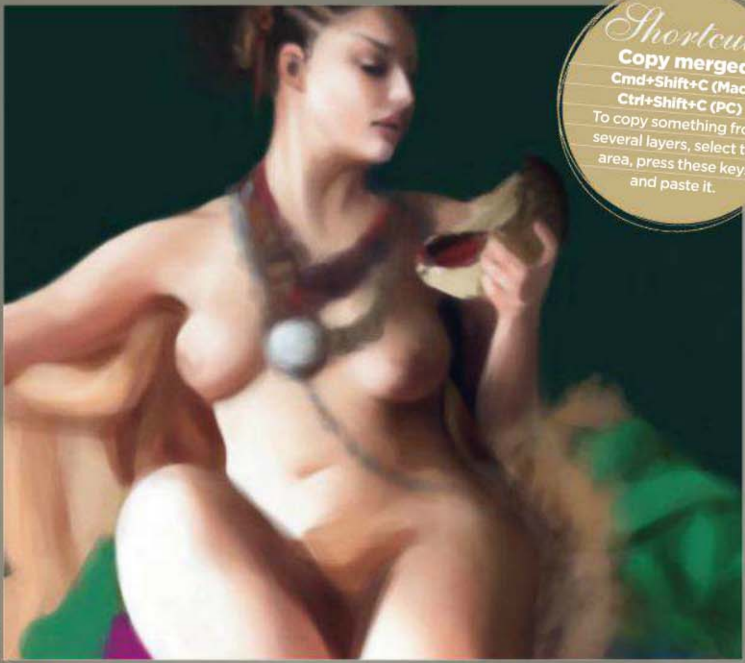


5 Defining shapes

Because my sketching process was a bit experimental and I worked while zoomed out of the painting, up close the figure appears blurry and messy. It's time to fix that. Still using the same brush, I reduce the diameter and define edges as well as the curves of the body. I pay extra attention to small convexities of the stomach, which naturally underlines the plumpness of my character.

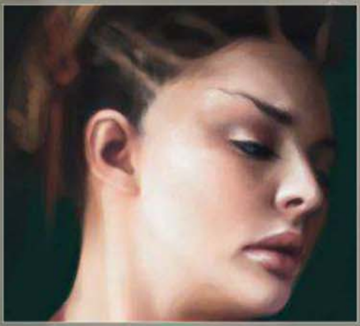
Shortcuts

Copy merged
Cmd+Shift+C (Mac)
Ctrl+Shift+C (PC)
To copy something from several layers, select the area, press these keys and paste it.



6 Select group of brushes

Because I want the painting to be realistic but still retain a painterly quality, I limit myself to a few, select brushes. The basic one is my usual ragged round. From Photoshop's default selection I use an airbrush for occasional smoothing, one bristle brush and a square brush. Finally, a traditional grainy brush will be used for adding an extra bit of texture that'll resemble a traditional canvas. All texturing effects in the painting will be created only with these brushes.

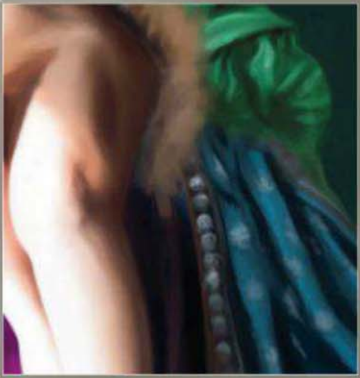


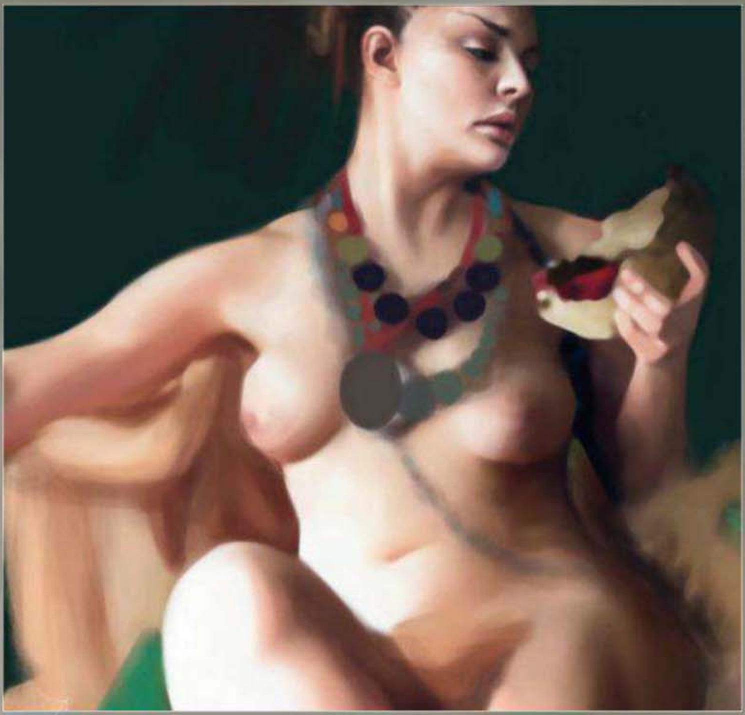
7 Visible brushstroking

Up until now I've worked in a similar manner to my usual workflow, but for this step I slightly change my approach. Because I want my image to feel painterly, I won't texture the face to look smooth and photo realistic, but instead add some very visible brushstrokes to underline its most important features. I place a few strokes with the rough traditional brush around the eyebrows, cheek and nose.

8 Modelling textiles

Once the face is partially completed, I move on to defining the textiles in the image. Because I'm unsure on what I want to do with the left-hand side of the painting, I start painting the folds on the right. Each type of fabric requires a different approach, so it's important to familiarise yourself with those variations so that you know how to accurately depict them on the canvas. For now I want the green to be a shiny satin, while the blue is a rough, slightly stiff raw silk. When depicting the folds in materials I'm mindful that the flow of a stiffer fabric isn't as smooth – it looks edgy and even creased. For softer materials the curve of the folds is delicate and natural.



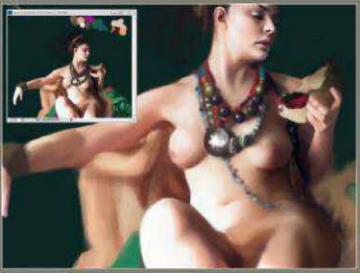


9 Preparing the necklace

I fancy a change of scene and so I move on to the necklace, which up until now only exists as a few messy strokes. First I paint flat shapes of the beads on top of the messy sketch. If you're wondering why I'm bothering to sketch on top of such a messy background, it's because this gives me some initial shade variation that I'll later blend into the skin, resulting in richer-looking colours. To do this I make my standard brush opaque and paint precise shapes.

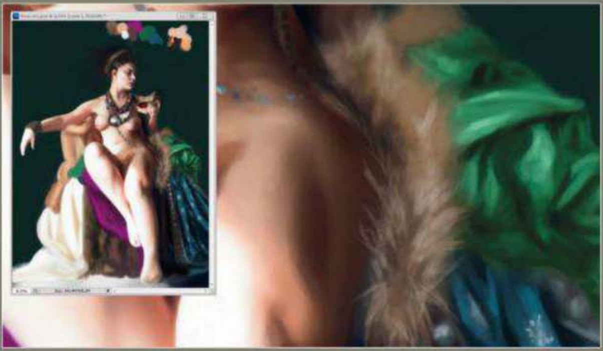
10 Preliminary shading

Now that my shapes are in place, I push the shading slightly by adding some highlights and shadows with a ragged brush. This simulates a bit of detail and gives me an idea of how the whole thing is going to look. I use a semi-transparent ragged round brush for this step.



11 Tackling the fur

It took me a while to figure out a simple way to paint fur, and not go crazy trying to get the strands right. The secret here is to treat fur as one surface or a very plump material, rather than a set of independent strands. The first thing I do is take a lighter version of my basic colour and paint some wider strokes on top of it with a ragged round brush. This simulates groups of strands. I then add variations in colour, placing some darker blobs at the base of it to simulate the natural shades.



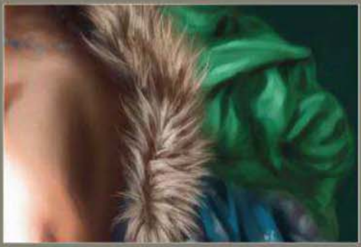
PRO SECRETS

Duplicate your window

When defining or detailing objects, it's important to know how your strokes affect the painting as a whole. How often have you found that an object looks great close up, but when you zoom out it's clear that it doesn't work with the rest of the painting? To avoid this situation, configure Photoshop to duplicate the view of your painting. This enables you to see your art when zoomed in and out at the same time.

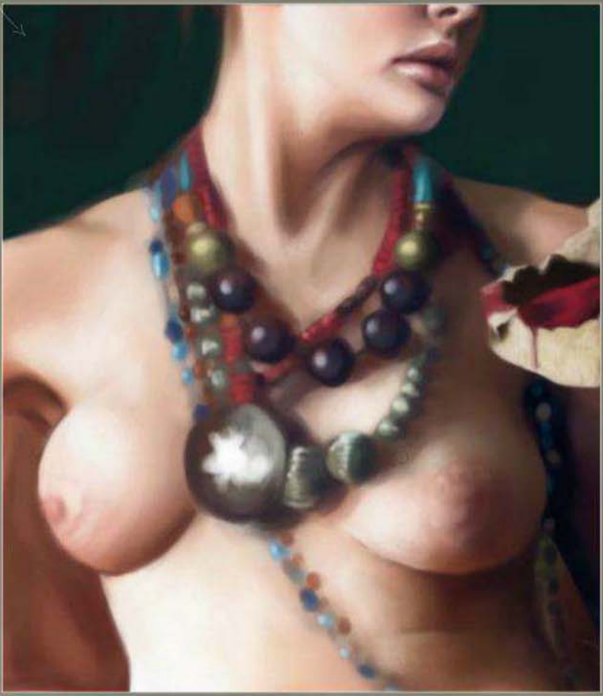
12 Finishing the fur

Once the base is prepared, I run over the area with the same brush, painting smaller strands and adding details of single hairs. If I did this without the base then the fur wouldn't have a natural "flow" and it would feel much more like just a chaotic layer of hair, rather than something soft and balanced.



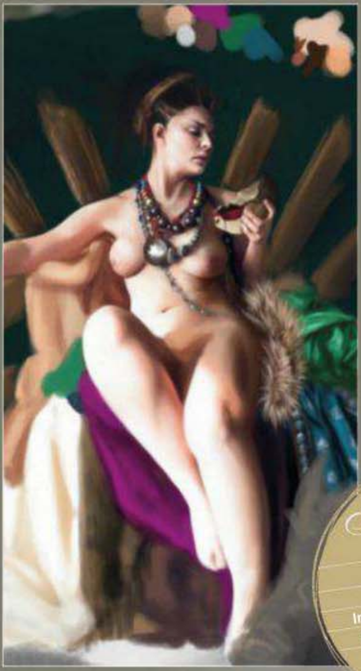
13 Completing the body

I finish up the body in a similar way I did the face: I put in a couple of opaque ragged round strokes and a few blobs with the rough traditional brush to achieve a painterly feel. I add precise shapes with a low diameter brush – for example, to emphasise the slightly concave bellybutton – and add a few lighter strokes to highlight the roundness of the stomach.



14 General sketch

Now that I'm at the point where I have some elements nearly done, I move on to defining the rest of the piece. I don't want my character to sit on any specific object, so I sketch out a rough wooden throne. It's subtle, yet gives some character and hints at the tribal atmosphere that I'm going for. I also want to add some skulls. Oh, and because I love animals, I'm going to paint a few boars around this woman, too.



PRO SECRETS

Texturing with one brush

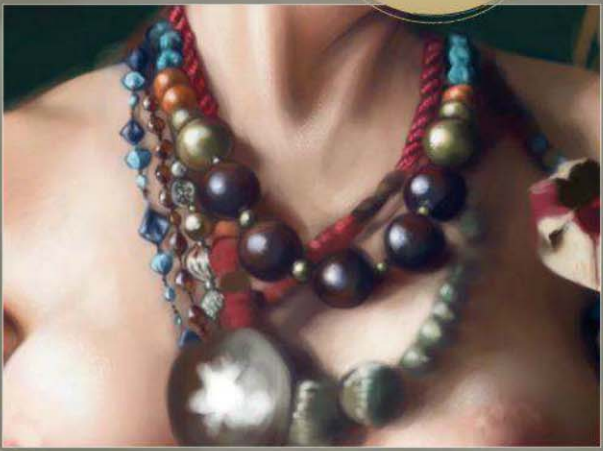
To create a believable texture without using a custom texturing brush, create colour variations and vary your brush strokes. For example, when painting stone, place small dots and lines of different colours of varying opacity from green through orange to standard browns and greys. Only when placed on top of each other, over and over again, will the multilayered blobs look believable.

Shortcuts

Change brush size

[and] (PC & Mac)

Increase or decrease the active brush size of the active brush in Photoshop.

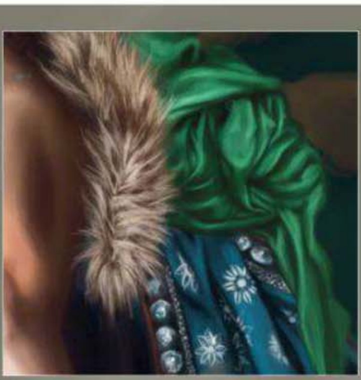


15 A touch of glam

One of the toughest parts of this painting is getting the necklace right. I don't want to overdo it, and yet it's supposed to be the focal point of the painting. I zoom in and define the edges further. I strengthen highlights and add slight colour variations to the beads. By adding dotted highlights and blobs of bounced colour I make them appear more detailed than they actually are. A rough brushstroke around the highlight, similar to those on the face, gives me an extra bit of roughness. In general, the trick here lies in the amount of mixed necklaces, not their individual shading. It's the variety of the beads that makes the whole area look intricate. If you look at them separately, you'll notice they aren't shaded with any degree of detail.

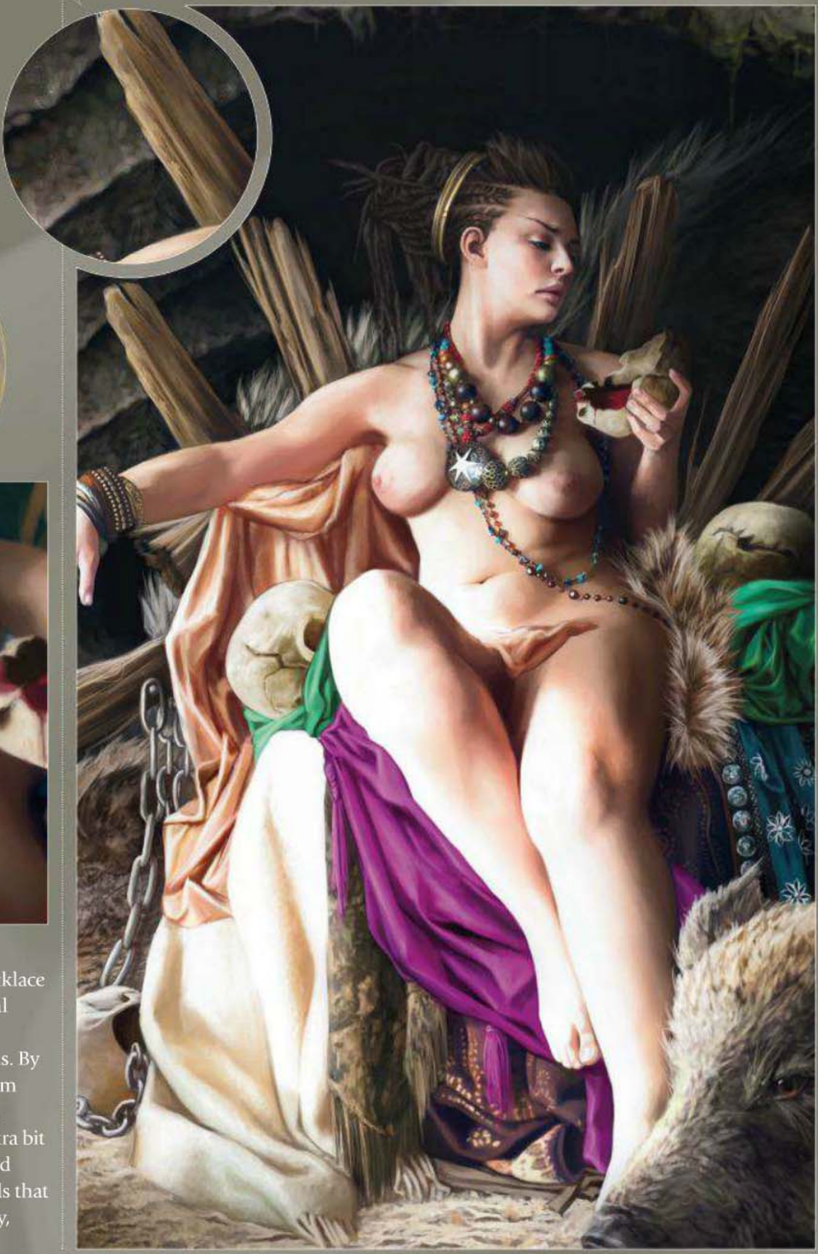
16 Texturing textiles

When it comes to depicting different kinds of textiles, you should consider highlight dispersion as well as noting how they're folded. Rougher materials tend to have their highlights much more diluted than smooth fabrics. As such, highlights on smooth pink silk will be condensed to narrow strokes of colour, those on satin will have visible points of concentration, and the lights on raw blue silk will be extremely diffused and hard to pinpoint.



17 Finishing up

I finish up the remaining areas of the painting in a similar manner to the techniques mentioned in the previous steps. After going online for anatomy references, I texture my boars in the same manner as I painted the fur. As you can see when zoomed in, the wooden and stone textures are very sketchy. I've done this deliberately, ensuring that the character is the centre of attention.



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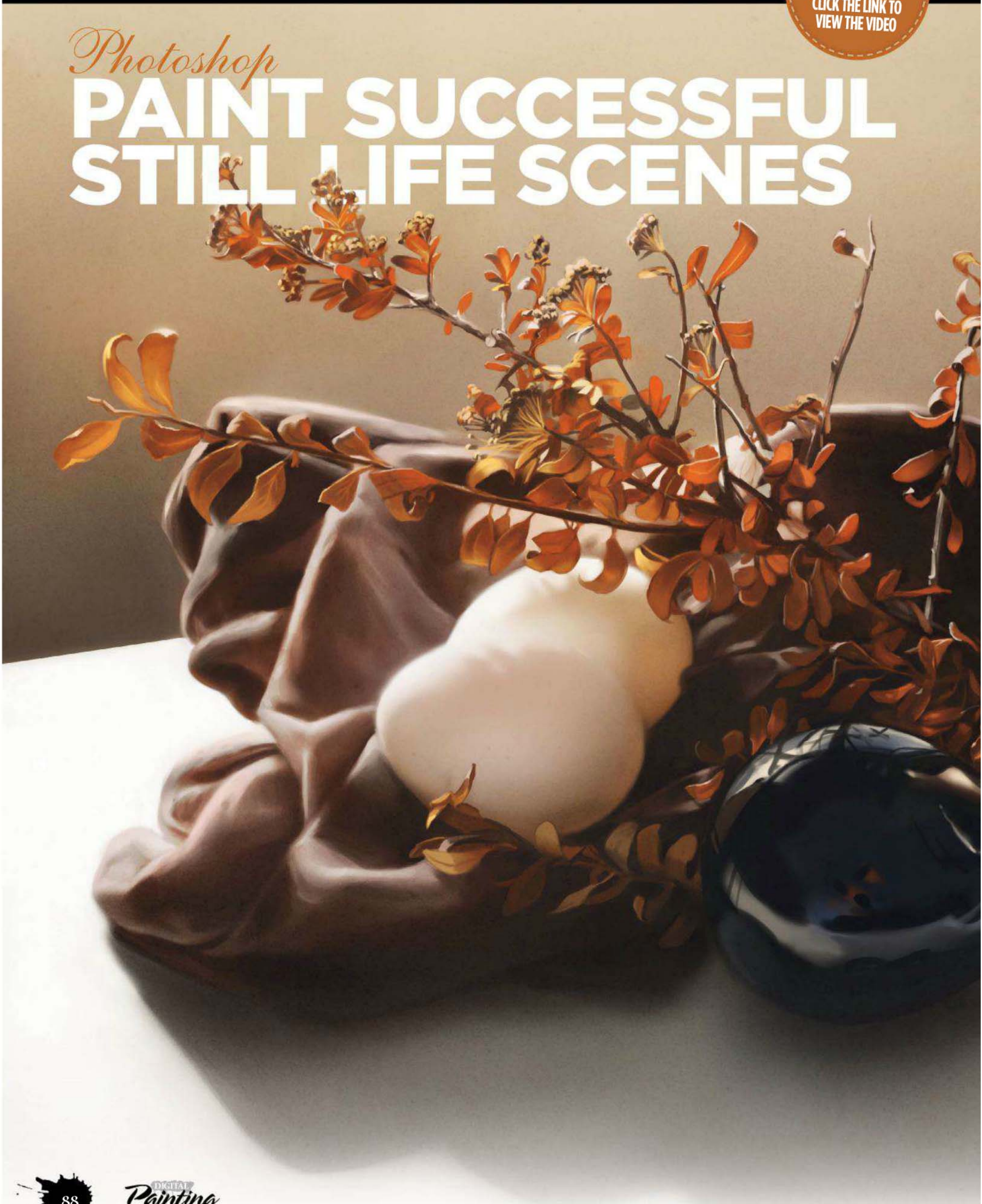
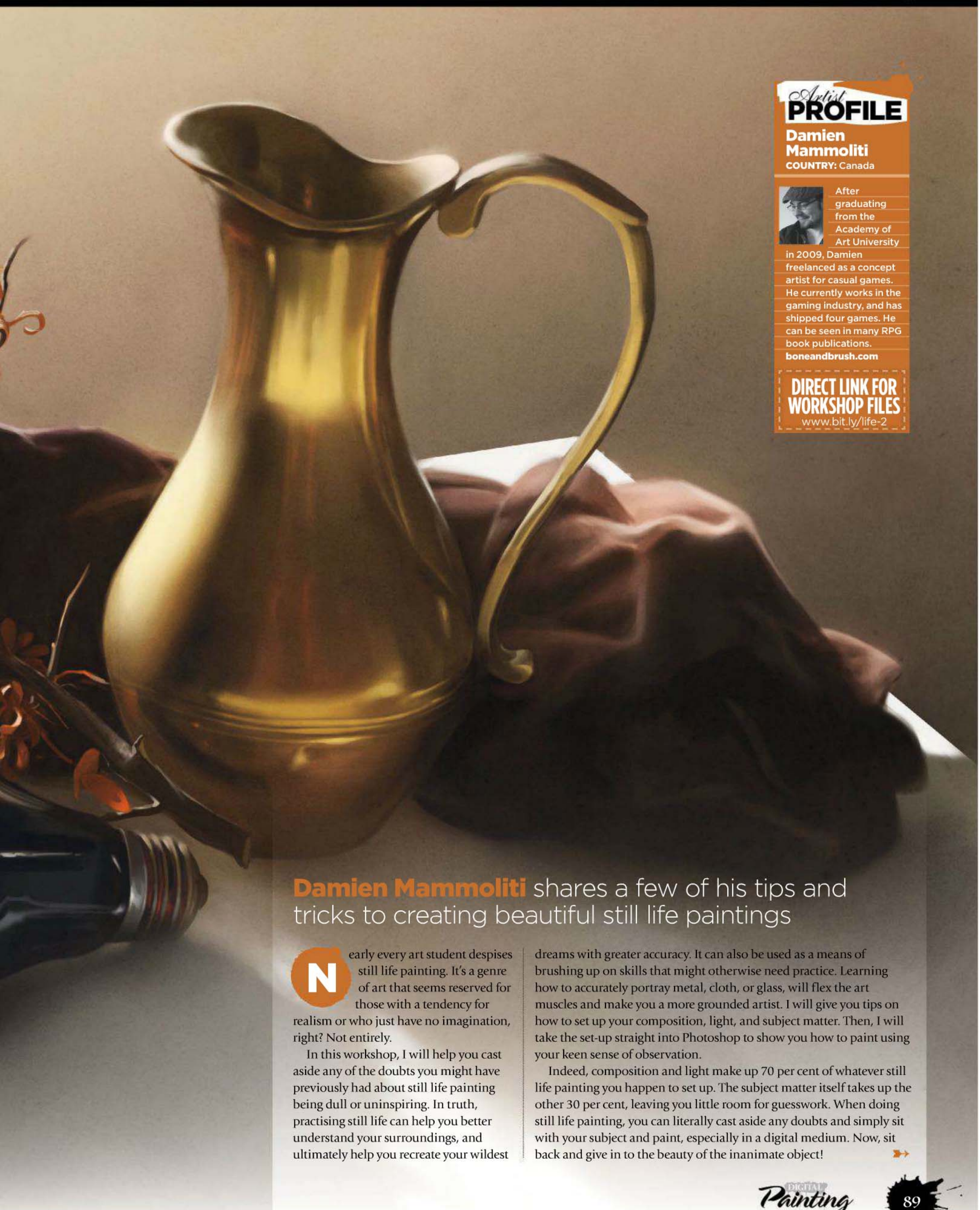
Please note: Disc content is now available from issue 85 onwards.

VIDEO WORKSHOP
CLICK THE LINK TO VIEW THE VIDEO

Photoshop

PAINT SUCCESSFUL STILL LIFE SCENES





Artist PROFILE

Damien Mammoliti
COUNTRY: Canada

After graduating from the Academy of Art University in 2009, Damien freelanced as a concept artist for casual games. He currently works in the gaming industry, and has shipped four games. He can be seen in many RPG book publications.
boneandbrush.com

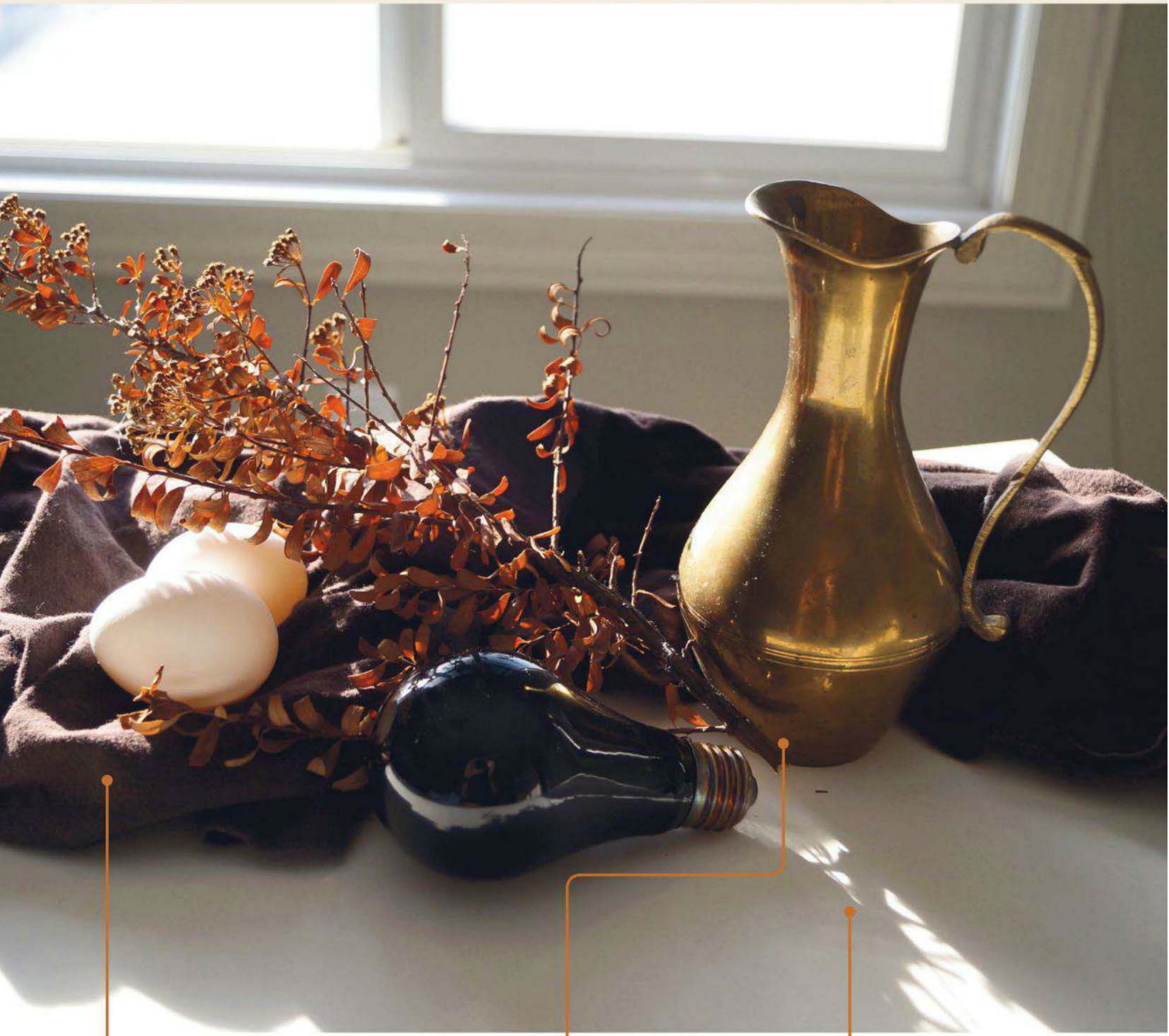
DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/life-2

Damien Mammoliti shares a few of his tips and tricks to creating beautiful still life paintings

Nearly every art student despises still life painting. It's a genre of art that seems reserved for those with a tendency for realism or who just have no imagination, right? Not entirely.

In this workshop, I will help you cast aside any of the doubts you might have previously had about still life painting being dull or uninspiring. In truth, practising still life can help you better understand your surroundings, and ultimately help you recreate your wildest dreams with greater accuracy. It can also be used as a means of brushing up on skills that might otherwise need practice. Learning how to accurately portray metal, cloth, or glass, will flex the art muscles and make you a more grounded artist. I will give you tips on how to set up your composition, light, and subject matter. Then, I will take the set-up straight into Photoshop to show you how to paint using your keen sense of observation.

Indeed, composition and light make up 70 per cent of whatever still life painting you happen to set up. The subject matter itself takes up the other 30 per cent, leaving you little room for guesswork. When doing still life painting, you can literally cast aside any doubts and simply sit with your subject and paint, especially in a digital medium. Now, sit back and give in to the beauty of the inanimate object!



1 Setting up the composition

When setting up the composition for my still life, I choose landscape orientation. This offers me a wider display of my other subject matters, such as the black light bulb and copper pitcher. I deliberately choose a wide selection of different types of materials to give the painting variety and texture. I also balance the composition by placing the brighter objects further apart from each other, while the dark bulb lays in shadow in the middle and doesn't distract.

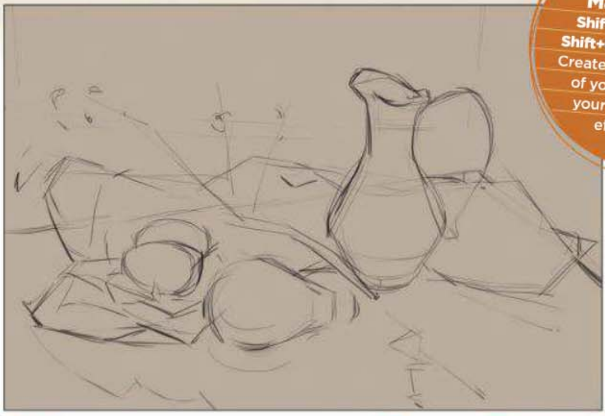
2 Choosing the star of the show

Part of my composition process is finding the 'star' or the main subject for my still life painting. Here, my main star is the obviously tall and bright pitcher, as it is the only object with such an array of shapes and curves, and is the brightest colour on the palette (yellow). All of the other objects in this composition are going to accentuate and complement my pitcher in one way or another, either by their texture contrast or simply through colour play.

3 Light it up for the best contrast

When setting up my composition on the table, I move it at an odd angle to the sun coming in from the window. I purposely use sunlight as it offers me the greatest contrast at certain times of the day (sunrise or sunset), and will also give richer, truer colours. I have aimed the light through the leaves of the dry branch and eggs to offer not only a more interesting shadow, but also brilliant orange and red colours which will accentuate the image.

Shortcuts
Make a replica
Shift+Alt+Ctrl+E (PC)
Shift+Option+Cmd (Mac)
Create a flattened replica of your image over all your layers for quick effect checks.



4 Plot your points

Now that I have photographed my image, I have taken my reference with me to my computer and started a new canvas in Photoshop. I try and keep the aspect ratio of the painting and reference about the same, so that I know how my proportions will lay out. I set up 'plot points' where I believe objects will be placed. Doing this helps my eventual sketch to be much more accurate when I get there.

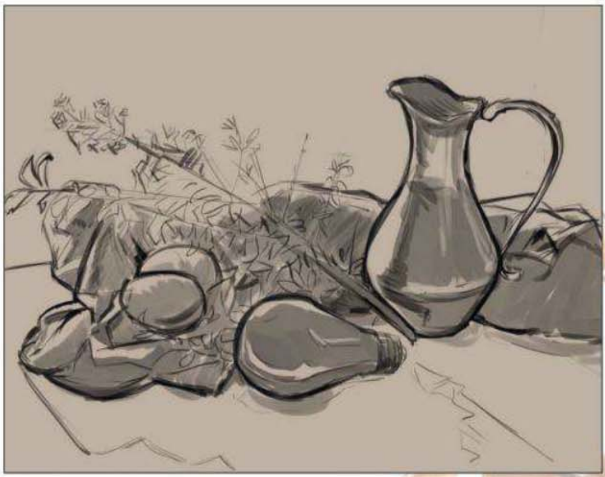
5 Now it's time to sketch it out

At this stage I have already begun to put in some basic values and give myself a greater understanding of where the lights and darks will be in my painting. Using the plot points from my previous step, I can refine and place the objects in their proper spots, making sure to measure with my eye where the edges, lines, and important landmarks will be. I pay close attention to negative and positive shapes, for greater accuracy.

PRO SECRETS

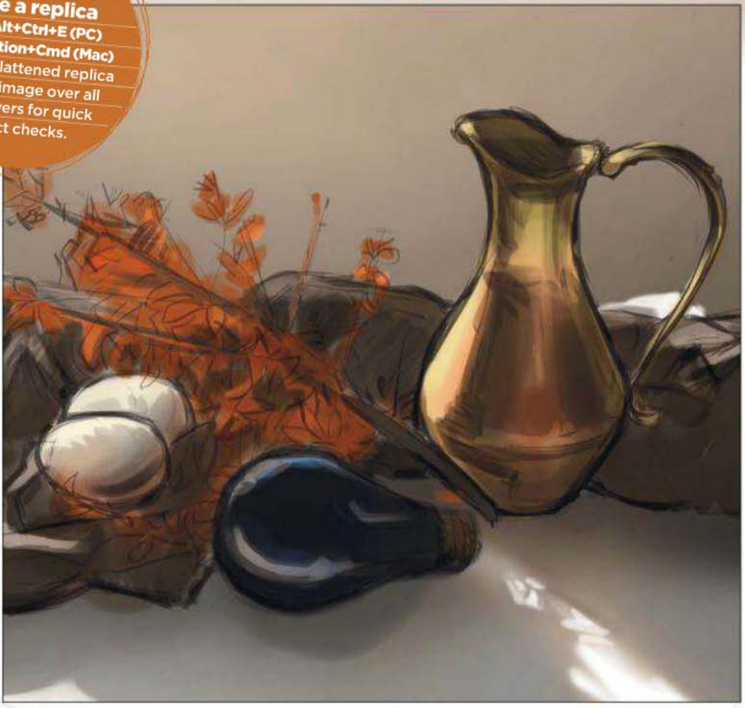
Keep flipping the image

Always be sure to flip your image horizontally (and even vertically) multiple times in the painting process. One of the biggest mistakes a digital artist can make is getting too comfortable with their own painting while forgetting to double-check their consistency. Flip your image to display mistakes in proportion or angle immediately, and keep your painting fresh on your eyes. Just don't forget which orientation is the correct one!



6 Don't be so negative

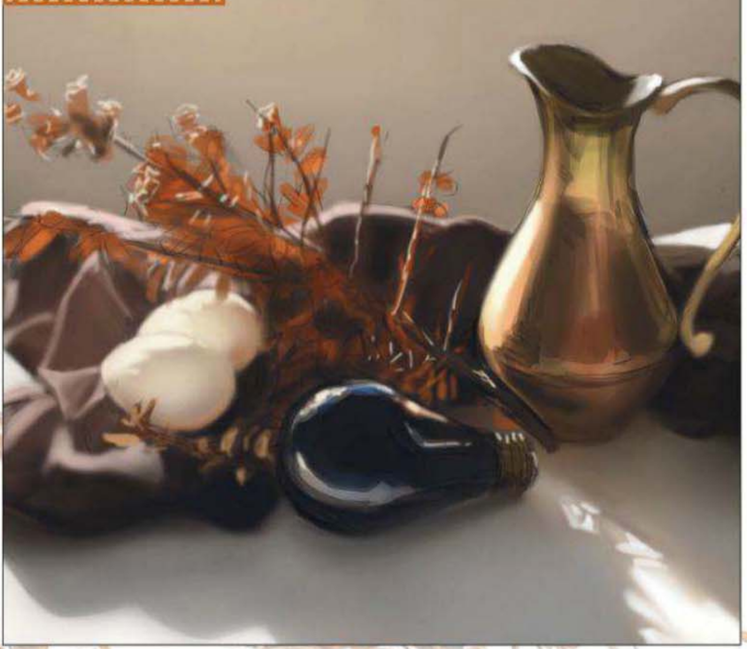
Negative and positive shapes are essential to laying out my sketch, and play a very important role in the overall success of my painting. Negative shapes are the shapes I look for between objects, like the handle of the pitcher, and what shape that produces, rather than the handle itself. Double-checking these shapes is one of the most important steps of the entire painting. It is crucial for me to get it right.



7 Colour it, roughly

This is the part of the painting where I start to breathe life into it. My main focus is to grab all the mid-tone colours and their respective values, and place them into the image for an overall look at it. Here, I really start to refine the values of the image, paying close attention to the chroma of the mid-tones, like the brightness of the orange leaves, versus the dim and dark cloth.

WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/dp-life



8 Colour it, better

This step begins my approach to removing the crutch of my sketch, and venturing further into the colouring process. My goal here is to nearly remove all of the line edges from my sketch by painting over them (yet preserving them on another layer), so that my understanding of the forms of the subjects and their surroundings can be gathered with greater potential. I begin understanding the reflections, but do not concern myself with detail.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP CS6

OPACITY APPLIED

This is your standard brush with the greatest size variance, but opacity smoothing applied. Great for sketching or putting in harder details without losing a soft painterly feel.

FATTER OPACITY

The same standard brush, but with less size variance. I use this very often for filling in large portions of the image, but it is decent enough to blend with.

CUSTOM BRUSH: ROUGH AND SMOOTH

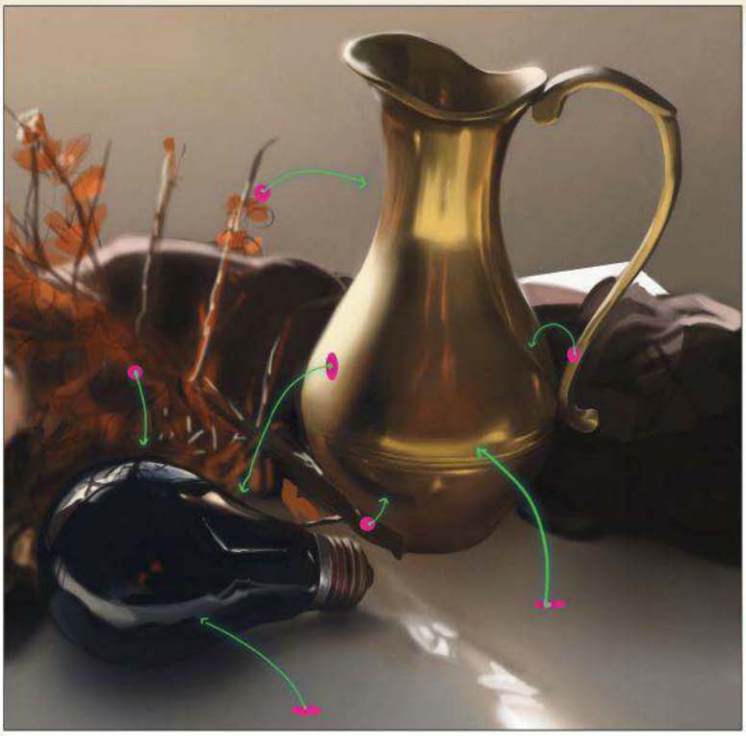
My go-to brush borrowed from the web that is great for putting in larger portions of paint and blending them in rather seamlessly. It adds a great texture.

AIRBRUSH

The softest brush used for putting in greater areas of very soft effects, like bloom lighting or blending on very smooth surfaces, like eggs.

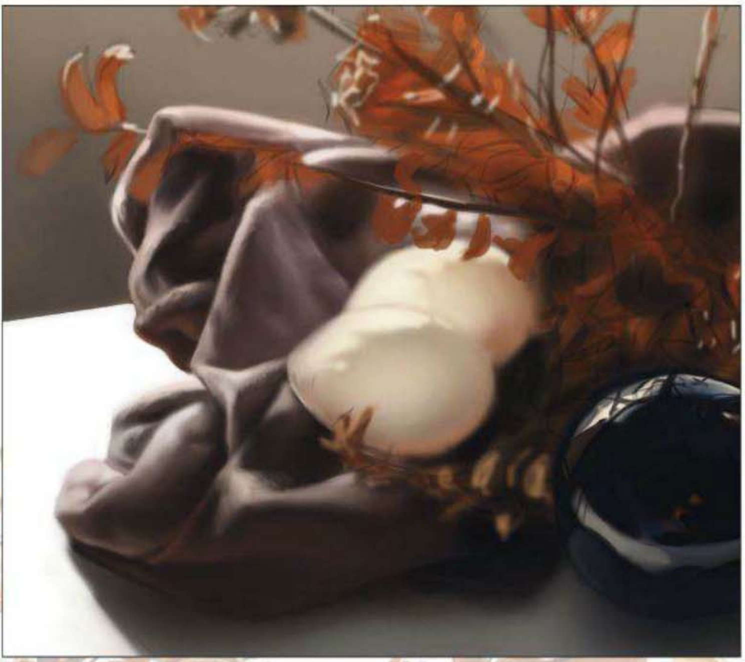
CUSTOM BRUSH: SPOTS

Another great brush from the web, designed for putting in very speckled dots. Great used as dust particles or spots on clothing.



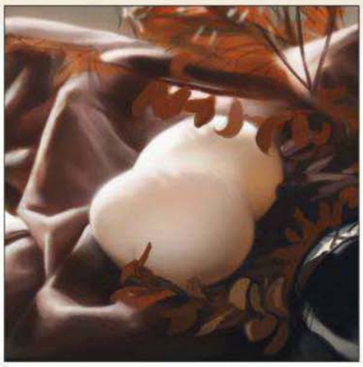
9 Time to reflect

During my painting process, I pay close attention to my subjects, especially the ones that reflect their surroundings. Here, my pitcher and bulb are reflecting all sorts of objects surrounding them, sometimes even disappearing at those edges because of how little of their own material shows through. In the bulb I can even see myself, taking a photo of the composition. In a more distant fashion, the red in the pitcher is also a reflection of me, adding colour.



10 The softer side

On the completely opposite spectrum of my harder, shinier objects, is the cloth. It poses a more complex subject to paint, as the folds try and confuse me. I take my time in understanding where the folds are going in order to portray them correctly, letting the light guide my eye over each fold and where it disappears. Part of the difficulty comes from accurately representing the buoyancy of the cloth, making sure the weight of the eggs shows.

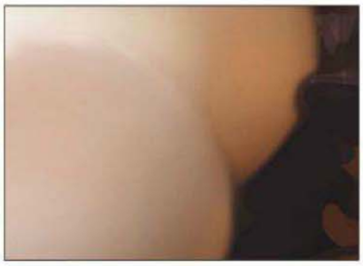


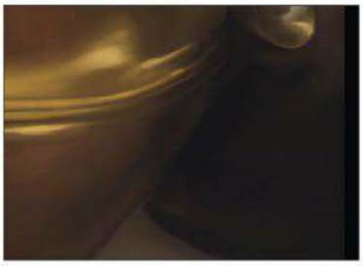
11 Hard yet soft

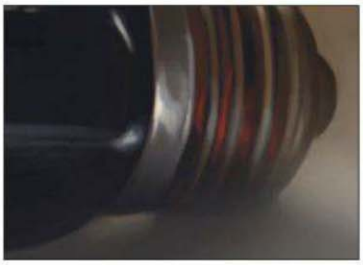
The purpose of the eggs in this composition is for great light play. I set up my light and twig to give the eggs a very particular shadow on their side, while the sun coming through the shell gives them lively colour. The hardest part of painting these is making sure to keep their shape hard, without losing the soft glow of the light play. I purposely use as soft a brush as I can for an even gradation.

12 Losing your edge

Part of my painting process involves looking for the lost and found edges in the composition. In doing so, I can play with the more painterly look of the piece, and lose a bit of detail to help the focus of the more obvious parts of the painting. Losing the edge of the eggs, pitcher, and bulb will accentuate their other obvious traits, like curves, shadow, or colour contrast.

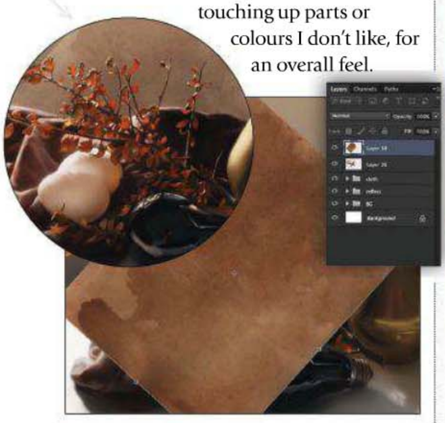






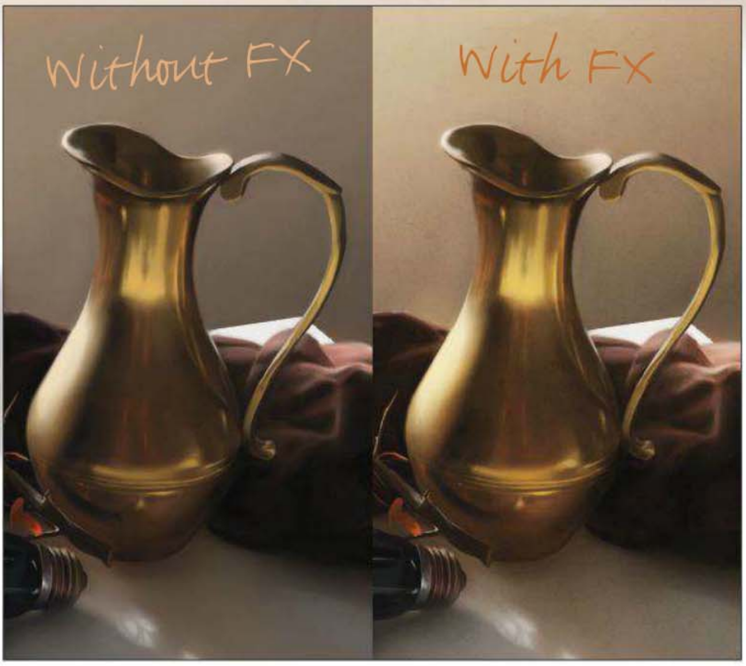
13 Texturize

Now that my painting is nearly finished, I can play with some special effects to help it look less like a smooth digital painting, and closer to a photo. Using some textures found on the web, I overlay these straight onto the canvas, touching up parts or colours I don't like, for an overall feel.



14 Special effects

On an Overlay layer, I select some of the brightest chroma in the image and start to use the Gradient tool to give things like the pitcher a shinier, more dramatic look. I also use the Gradient/Overlay layer to help push the FX of the light source from the left.



15 Finale

My last touches for my painting are with adjustments to odd shapes by using the Liquify tool, or putting in some more effects of light through the cast shadow and leaves. Overall, I flip the image multiple times (even upside-down), and might even do a quick hue/saturation grey test to make sure things are as accurate as possible to my reference. Once I'm happy with the final image, I can save it out and call it a day!

PRO SECRETS

Always draw what you see

Never draw what you know, only what you see. When painting from reference, your goal is to accurately paint what it is you perceive with your eye in terms of value, colour, and chroma. Even when your brain tells you it makes no sense, or you know that copper should be orange, it most likely is not the case. Don't ever let what you know get in the way of what you observe!

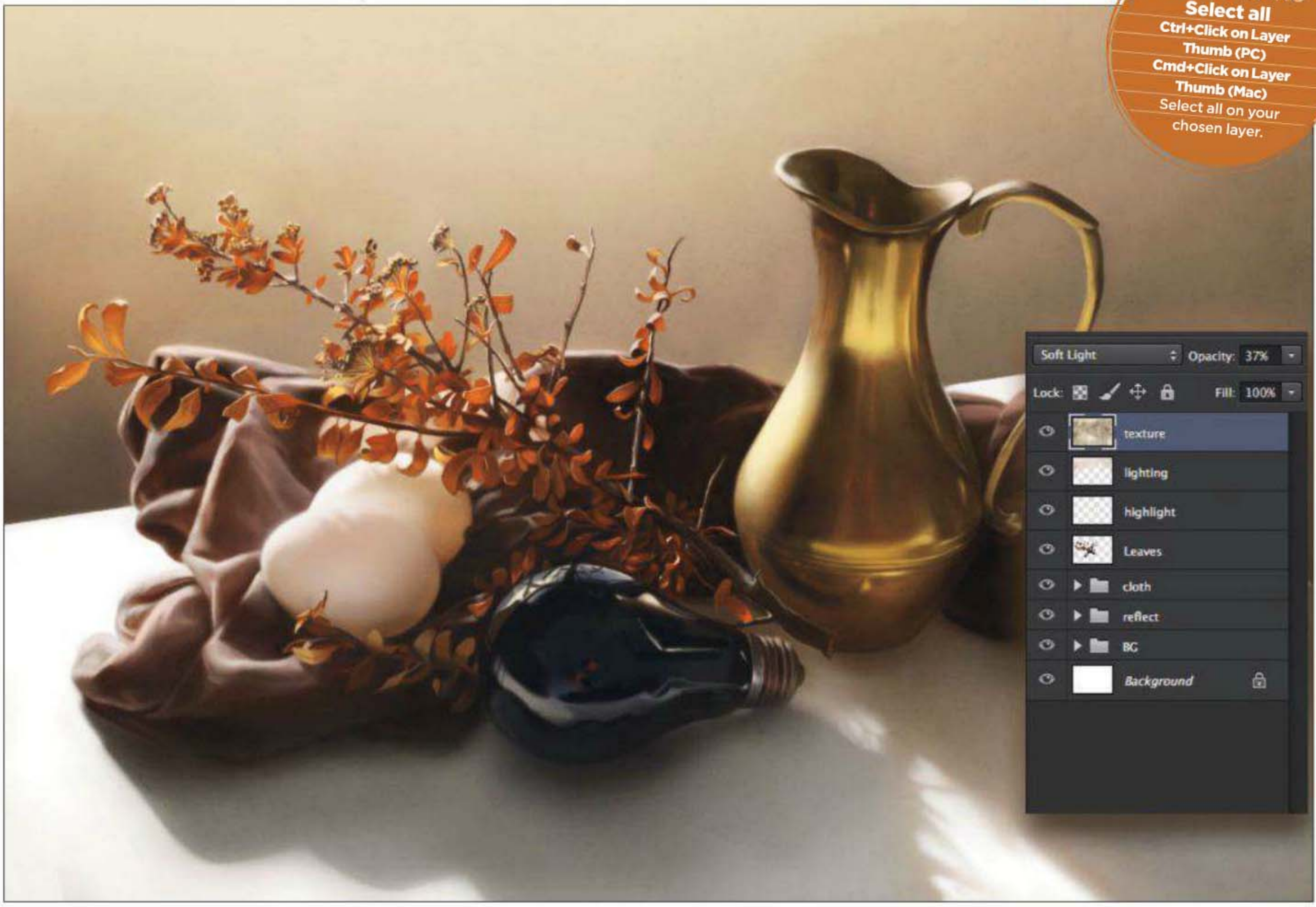
Shortcuts

Select all

Ctrl+Click on Layer Thumb (PC)

Cmd+Click on Layer Thumb (Mac)

Select all on your chosen layer.



Soft Light — Opacity: 37%

Lock: — Fill: 100%

VIDEO WORKSHOP
CLICK THE LINK TO VIEW THE VIDEO

Artist insight

DEPICT CLOTHES AND MATERIALS

Drazenka Kimpel shares her tips on painting the materials and accessories that will enhance your illustrative storytelling

Artist **PROFILE**

Drazenka Kimpel
COUNTRY: US

Drazenka is a freelance illustrator. Her style is often influenced by Victorian and pre-Raphaelite painters, and she's provided artwork for gaming, comic and publishing companies.
www.creativedust.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/dp-fabric

Details in a painting are crucial in capturing the viewer's attention. All objects you paint have substance, and you need to convincingly describe what those objects are made of, so that they can help to convey the tone of the scene.

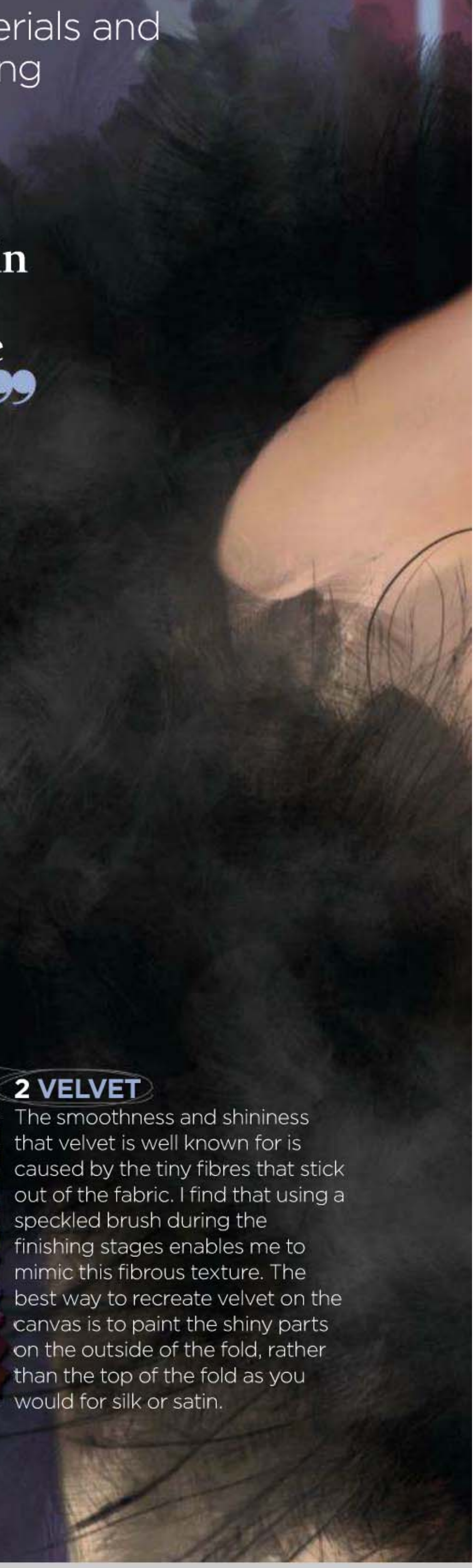
In this workshop I'll help you visually represent different fabric materials, metals, and organic and man-made accessories. I'll also demonstrate the use of patterns and how they interact with the shape and environment.

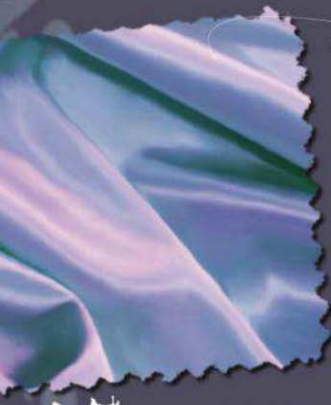
By applying texture, colour and shading to objects in your art, you'll be able to differentiate between materials. For example, what a fabric's folds can tell you about its density and weight. Lighter fabrics such as gauze and chiffon will create soft, tubular folds, while heavy, dense fabric such as denim or canvas will create more sharply defined folds.

While colour alone won't say much about a fabric, it can reveal information about a particular metal. Unlike fabric, metal doesn't create folds; it's usually flat or slightly curved – such as a suit of armour. The addition of metal to an accessory can enhance its sense of realism.

Before including any such materials into your painting, have them there for a reason. Those items will more than likely tell the viewer about the time period, region, character stature, and so on.

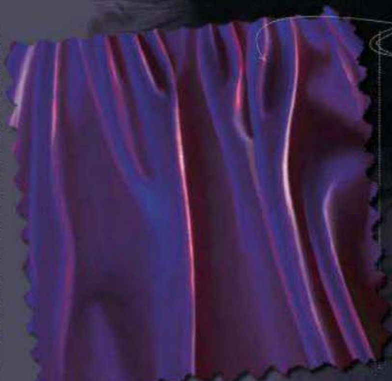
> “By applying texture, colour and shading to objects in your art, you'll be able to differentiate between materials”





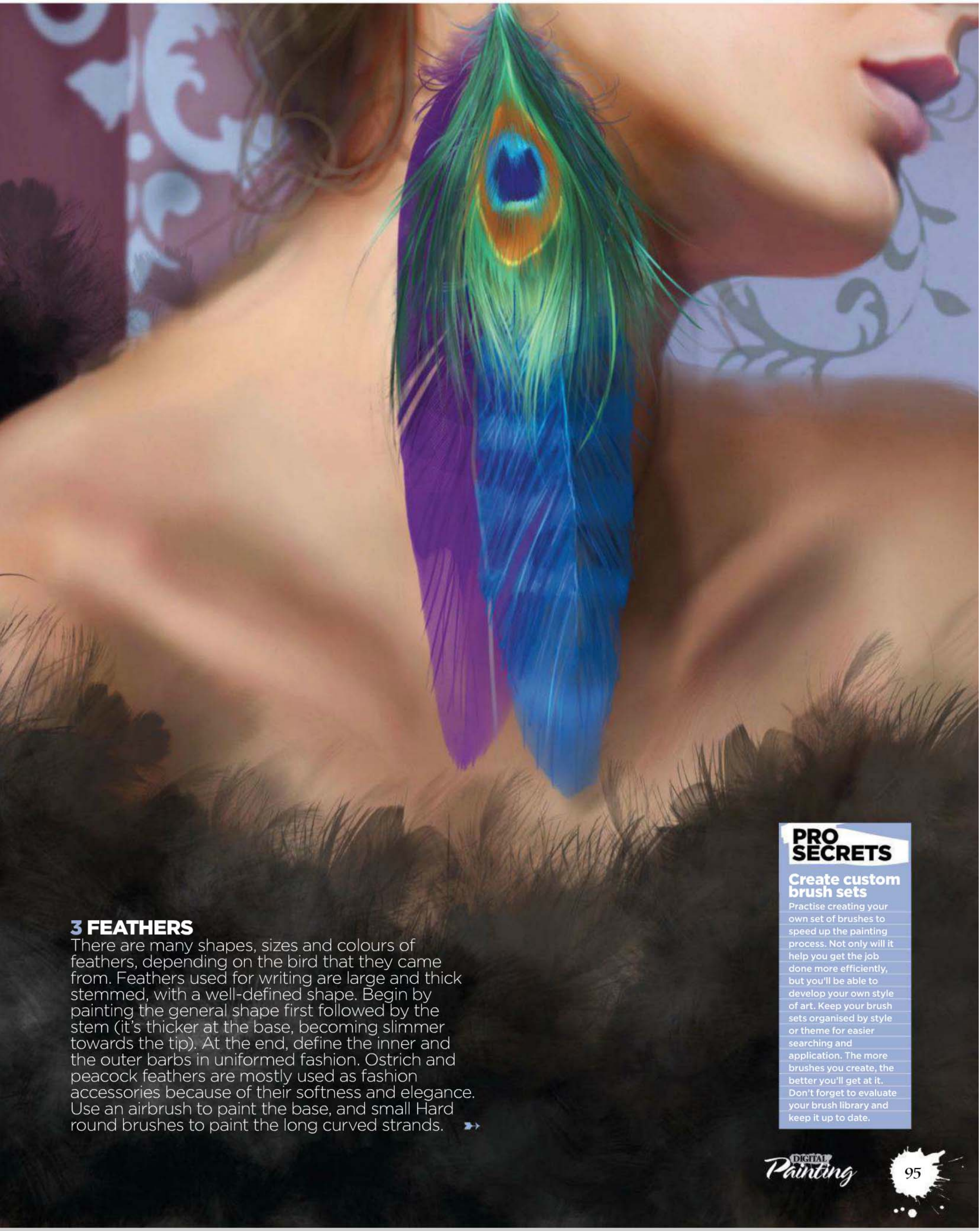
1 SATIN

This material is easily recognisable by its glossy surface and dull back. It's a heavy fabric and drapes very well. Paint soft, curvy folds with the highlights at the top of each fold. Due to its lustre, satin will absorb some colour from its surroundings, so use variation of shades while painting. Make the most of smooth blending techniques – the fabric has to appear smooth. For best results, use low opacity airbrushes.



2 VELVET

The smoothness and shininess that velvet is well known for is caused by the tiny fibres that stick out of the fabric. I find that using a speckled brush during the finishing stages enables me to mimic this fibrous texture. The best way to recreate velvet on the canvas is to paint the shiny parts on the outside of the fold, rather than the top of the fold as you would for silk or satin.



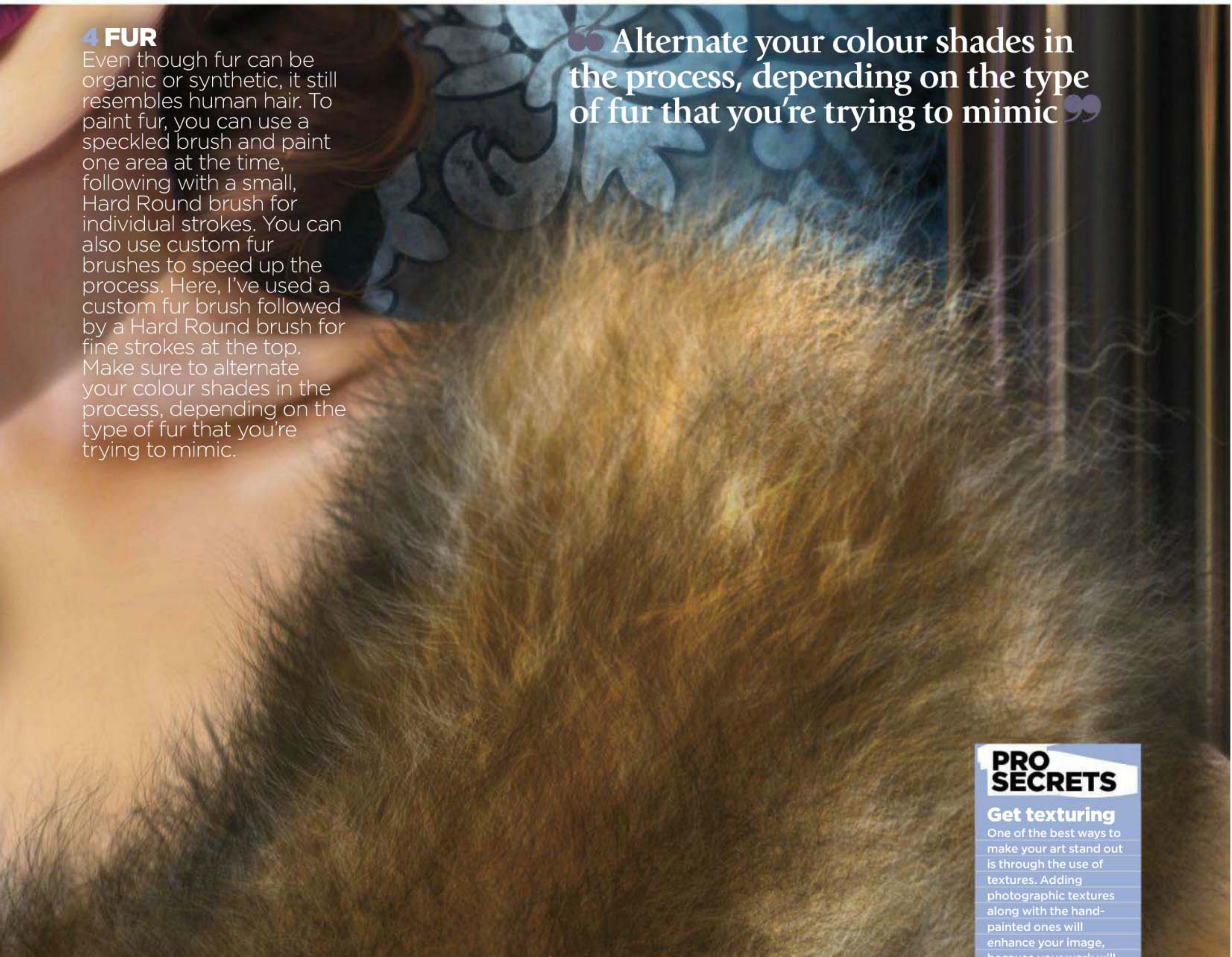
3 FEATHERS

There are many shapes, sizes and colours of feathers, depending on the bird that they came from. Feathers used for writing are large and thick stemmed, with a well-defined shape. Begin by painting the general shape first followed by the stem (it's thicker at the base, becoming slimmer towards the tip). At the end, define the inner and the outer barbs in uniformed fashion. Ostrich and peacock feathers are mostly used as fashion accessories because of their softness and elegance. Use an airbrush to paint the base, and small Hard round brushes to paint the long curved strands.

PRO SECRETS

Create custom brush sets

Practise creating your own set of brushes to speed up the painting process. Not only will it help you get the job done more efficiently, but you'll be able to develop your own style of art. Keep your brush sets organised by style or theme for easier searching and application. The more brushes you create, the better you'll get at it. Don't forget to evaluate your brush library and keep it up to date.



4 FUR

Even though fur can be organic or synthetic, it still resembles human hair. To paint fur, you can use a speckled brush and paint one area at the time, following with a small, Hard Round brush for individual strokes. You can also use custom fur brushes to speed up the process. Here, I've used a custom fur brush followed by a Hard Round brush for fine strokes at the top. Make sure to alternate your colour shades in the process, depending on the type of fur that you're trying to mimic.

> Alternate your colour shades in the process, depending on the type of fur that you're trying to mimic

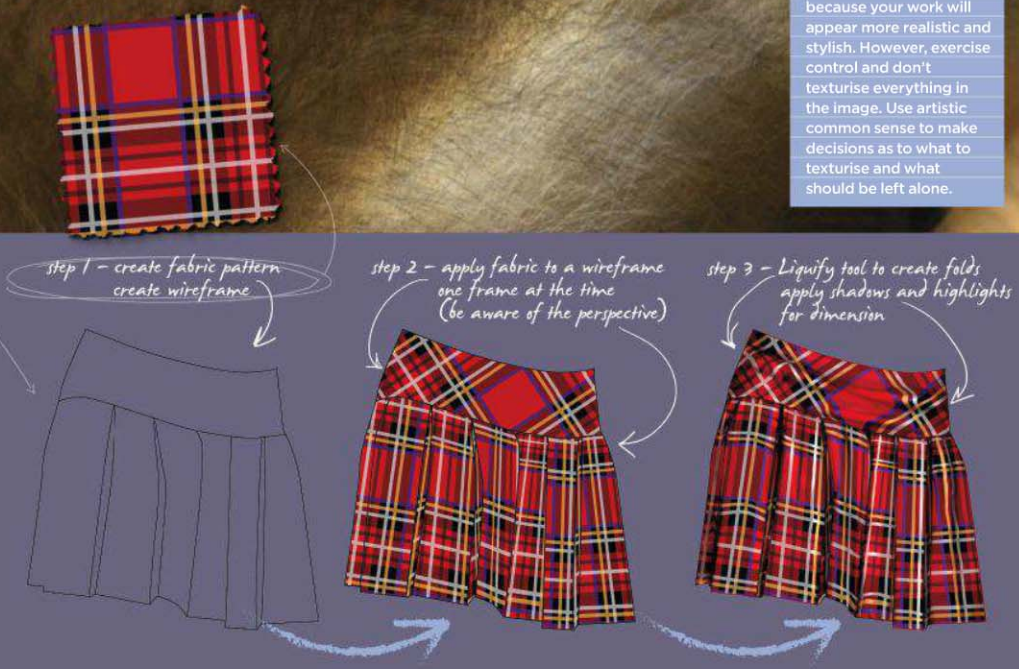
PRO SECRETS

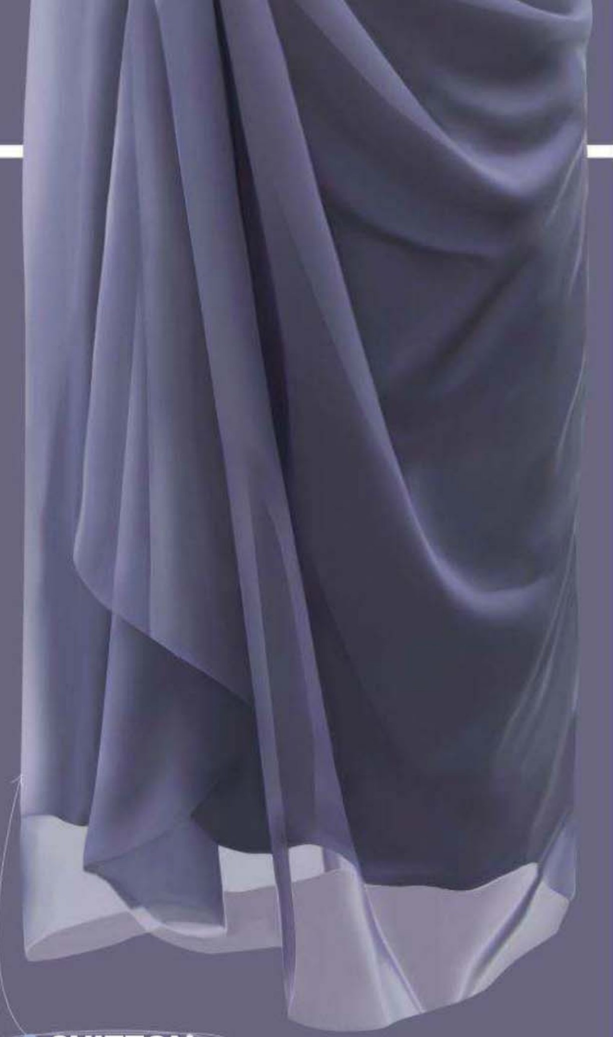
Get texturing

One of the best ways to make your art stand out is through the use of textures. Adding photographic textures along with the hand-painted ones will enhance your image, because your work will appear more realistic and stylish. However, exercise control and don't texturise everything in the image. Use artistic common sense to make decisions as to what to texturise and what should be left alone.

5 PLAID

This woven cloth has a tartan pattern, consisting of criss-crossed horizontal and vertical thick lines in a myriad of colours. The fabric appears somewhat fuzzy due to the texture of the wool fibres. For the best result, work on one section at a time rather than all of it at once. Paint this material using soft brushes with light strokes; pattern lines should always follow the lines of the folds.


step 1 – create fabric pattern
create wireframe
step 2 – apply fabric to a wireframe
one frame at the time
(be aware of the perspective)
step 3 – Liquify tool to create folds
apply shadows and highlights
for dimension

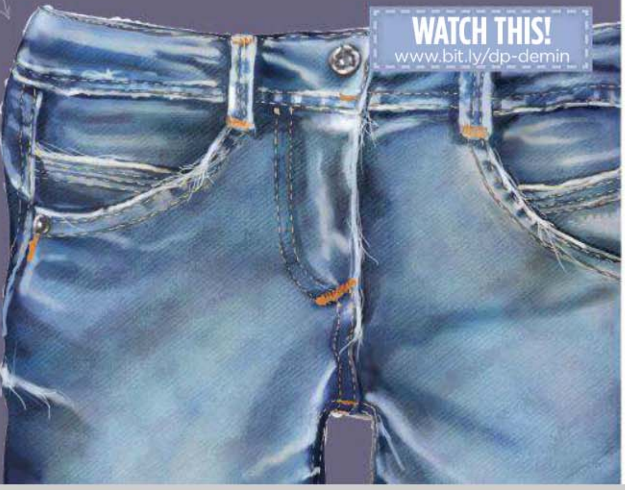


6 CHIFFON

This fabric is woven into a very fine mesh, which appears smooth to the eye. Its lightweight and sheer structure makes this fabric resemble foam. To paint this material, use brushes set to between 30 and 40 per cent Opacity and utilise a lot of layers. Retain more transparency in the centre and less on the edges. When overlapped, the transparency of the fabric will give the impression of depth. If you're unsure of how the fabric will overlap to create folds, check out some reference photos while you paint.

7 DENIM

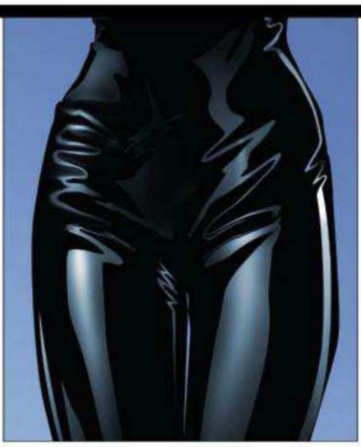
When you paint denim, you have to remember that this material is made out of woven yarn, which creates diagonal groove lines across the fabric. It's dull in appearance and usually quite thick. For greater realism use variations of colour and tone during the painting process to mimic faded areas. This is a great opportunity to use custom texture brushes to paint the grooves, and small brushes to paint the wear and tear.

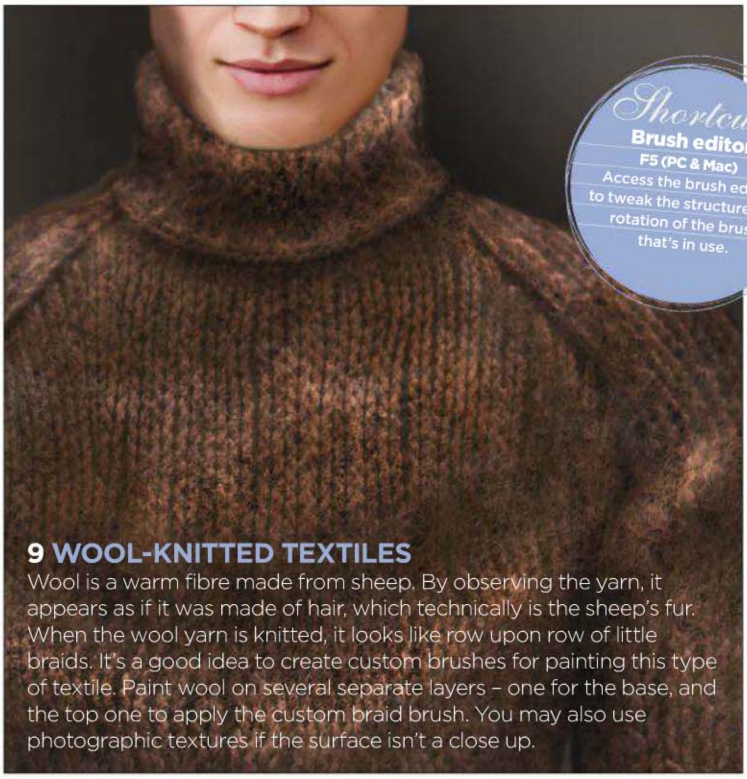


WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/dp-demin

8 LATEX

Depending on its use, this material can either be highly reflective or have a matte finish. It's stretchy and closely conforms to the shape of its wearer. When stretched over a surface, it creates a great numbers of folds, which are somewhat flat and small. Use a Pen tool for the reflective parts, in combination with gradient filling. To make the material appear to stretch over the surface, use either the Liquify filter or the Smudge tool, but do so sparingly.





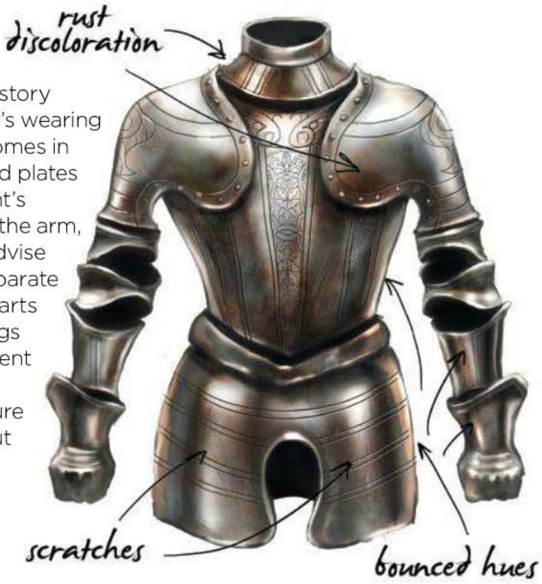
Shortcuts
Brush editor
F5 (PC & Mac)
Access the brush editor to tweak the structure and rotation of the brush that's in use.

9 WOOL-KNITTED TEXTILES

Wool is a warm fibre made from sheep. By observing the yarn, it appears as if it was made of hair, which technically is the sheep's fur. When the wool yarn is knitted, it looks like row upon row of little braids. It's a good idea to create custom brushes for painting this type of textile. Paint wool on several separate layers – one for the base, and the top one to apply the custom braid brush. You may also use photographic textures if the surface isn't a close up.

10 ARMOUR

Painting dents, rust and dirt on armour is a good way to tell a visual story about the character who's wearing it. A full suit of armour comes in many layered, segmented plates to accommodate a knight's movement, especially in the arm, leg and hand areas. I'd advise painting the plates as separate layers, overlapping the parts where needed. Engravings and patterns using different coloured metals are an extra touch that will ensure your character stands out from the crowd.

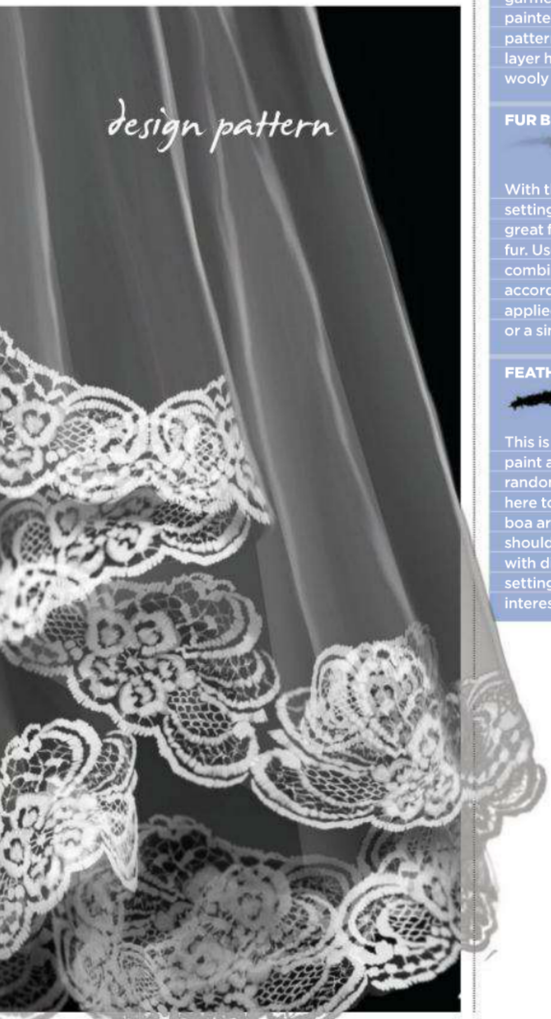


WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/dp-armour

11 LACE

A small, Round Hard brush is sufficient to do the job of drawing lace. If you use reference photos when painting lace you can easily follow the pattern and make it look realistic. Should you decide to include large areas for lace, draw a pattern, and copy and paste it repeatedly. Connect the design pattern with tiny lines resembling treads. In a similar manner to chiffon, use many layers to overlap the pattern, but don't change your layer settings in the process. Keep everything uniform.

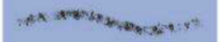
> “Use reference photos so that you can follow the pattern and make it look realistic”



WORKSHOP BRUSHES

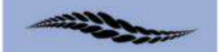
PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: DENIM BRUSH



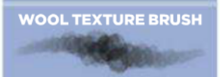
This brush is great for enhancing the denim texture once the base colour surface is painted, or in combination while you paint. Try not to overlap the strokes.

WOOL KNITTED BRUSH



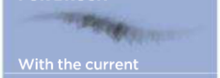
Use it to paint the relief pattern on a knitted sweater by applying repetitive, directional strokes along the length of the textile. Paint one stroke at a time for a realistic result.

WOOL TEXTURE BRUSH



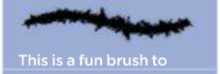
To add texture, apply this brush randomly over the entire surface of the garment after you've painted the knitted pattern. A Soft Light layer helps enhance the wooly texture.

FUR BRUSH



With the current settings, this brush is great for quickly painting fur. Use colour combinations accordingly. It can be applied as a fluid stroke or a single stamp.

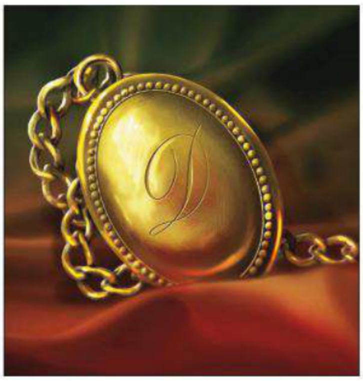
FEATHER BOA BRUSH



This is a fun brush to paint a bunch of feathers randomly. I've used it here to paint a feather boa around the girl's shoulders. Use this brush with different colour settings for some interesting results.

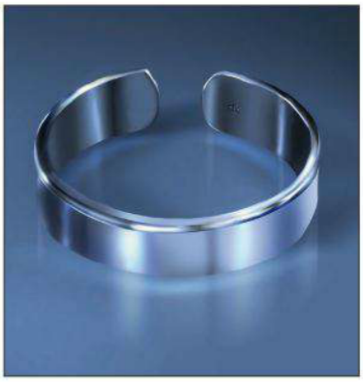
12 GOLD

Pure gold, by its very definition, is bright yellow and very shiny. However, painting gold using just one shade of yellow isn't going to do the job. Because the metal is shiny, its surface will bounce-reflect the colours in the immediate environment. To paint realistic gold you need to use yellows and whites for the highlights, mustard greens and oranges for base colours, and browns for shadows.

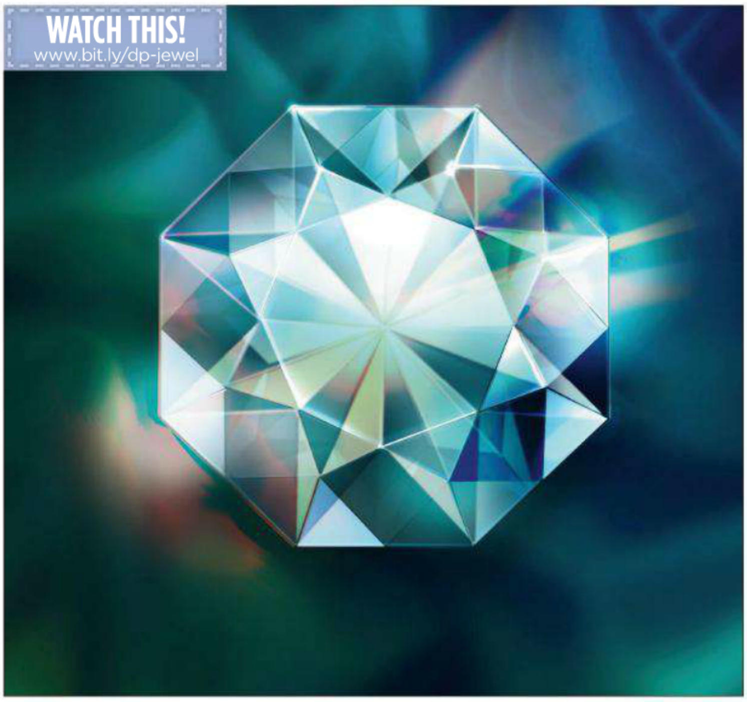


13 SILVER

This is a highly reflective metal and appears grey in its original state. When placed in an environment this metal will absorb the surrounding colours. Painting silver can be a challenge. The best way to start is by using darker shades of grey for the base colour, lighter greys and whites for highlights, and dark grey and black for shadows. Having said that, don't forget to pick up the shades from neighbouring objects.

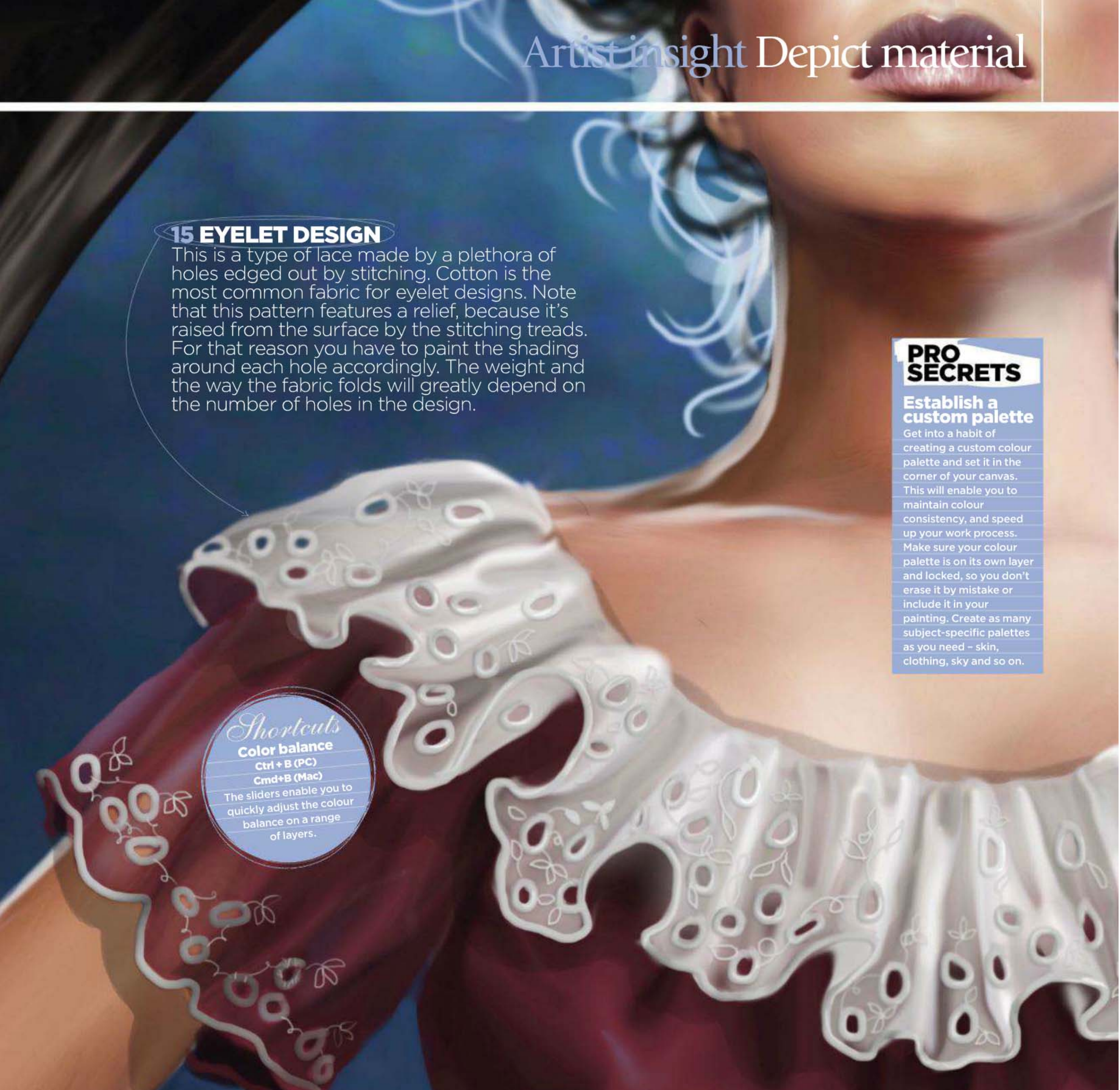


WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/dp-jewel



14 GEMSTONES

When cut and polished, gems display brilliant lustre and shine. Start by creating the structure of the cut. First draw the outline skeleton of the wireframe, using one layer for the top and another layer for the bottom. This is important because the translucency of the stone reveals the shapes beneath. The wireframes should resemble a number of triangular shapes. Paint each shape separately, using gradient filling. If the stone is a ruby for example, don't just stick to reds – utilise shades of orange, violet and pink. The same goes for other types of gemstones.



15 EYELET DESIGN

This is a type of lace made by a plethora of holes edged out by stitching. Cotton is the most common fabric for eyelet designs. Note that this pattern features a relief, because it's raised from the surface by the stitching treads. For that reason you have to paint the shading around each hole accordingly. The weight and the way the fabric folds will greatly depend on the number of holes in the design.

PRO SECRETS

Establish a custom palette

Get into a habit of creating a custom colour palette and set it in the corner of your canvas. This will enable you to maintain colour consistency, and speed up your work process. Make sure your colour palette is on its own layer and locked, so you don't erase it by mistake or include it in your painting. Create as many subject-specific palettes as you need – skin, clothing, sky and so on.

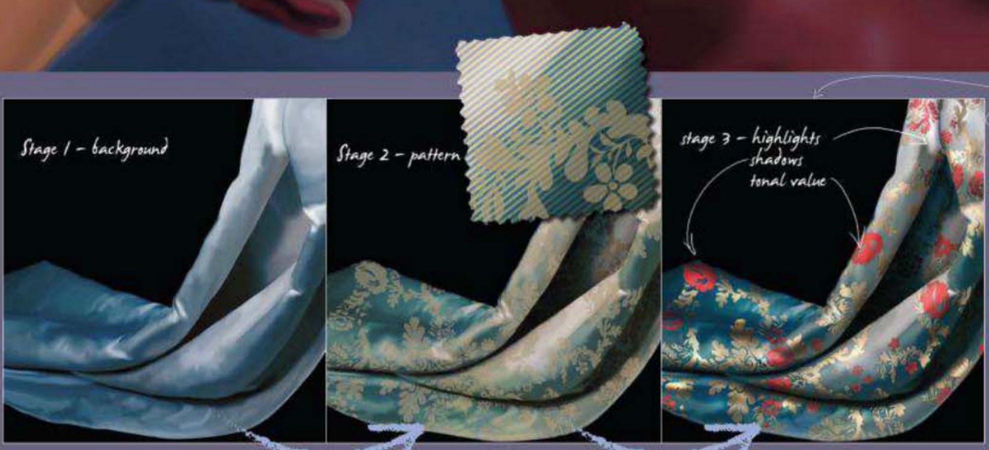
Shortcuts

Color balance

Ctrl + B (PC)

Cmd+B (Mac)

The sliders enable you to quickly adjust the colour balance on a range of layers.



16 BROCADE

This decorative fabric is known for its embossed design pattern and sheen. Brocade is woven, so fibre lines will be visible. Paint this fabric using a couple of layers: one for the solid textured surface and another for the patterned design. Make the decorative design look as if it's embossed by painting highlights and subtle shadows. To add refinement, create the design by using different colours.

Painter & Photoshop

PAINT GREYSCALE IMAGES WITH EASE

Producing a black and white composition isn't without its pitfalls. Avoid them with the help of **Marta Dahlig**

Creating a greyscale image forces you to take a different approach to the painting process and, as such, is usually much harder than painting in full colour. Despite this, you might still want to give painting in black and white a shot for two main reasons. First, you can treat a greyscale image simply as a stage of the painting process, creating something that you'll add colour to later. This is a good solution when you're either unsure about what hues to choose for the piece, or are good at rendering forms but still have some doubts about your colours. Second, painting in greyscale places the emphasis on lighting and composition rather than the tiny details, so it's great for strengthening an image's mood, especially for dramatic or melancholic scenes.

I'll outline the key elements of completing a painting in greyscale, starting from composition and lighting theory tips to texturing and final touches. If you want to use greyscale as a basis for later adding colour, I'll explain how to apply hues to achieve lively effects.

Artist **PROFILE**

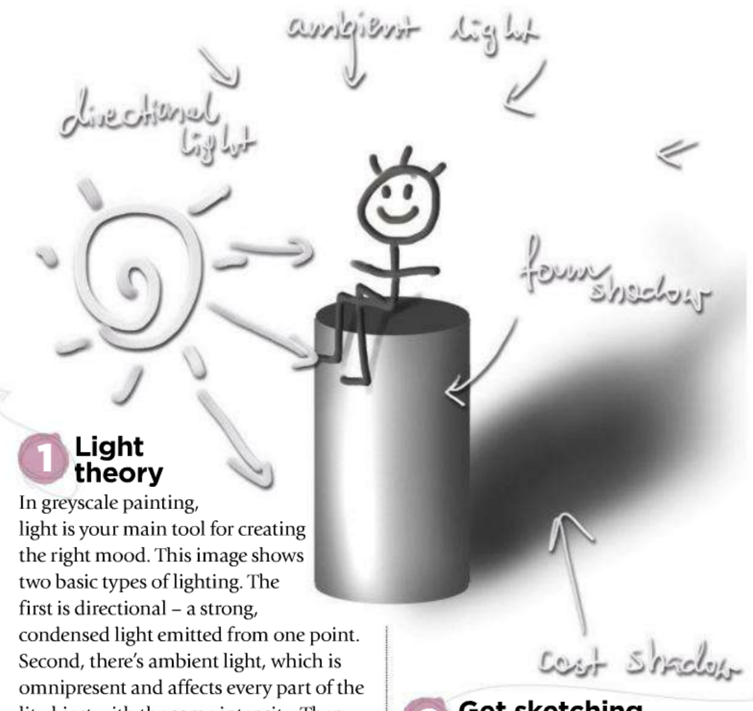
Marta Dahlig

COUNTRY: Poland

Marta is a self-taught artist who focuses mainly on character painting. Aside from working as an illustrator for several publishing houses, she creates concept art for mobile gaming companies.

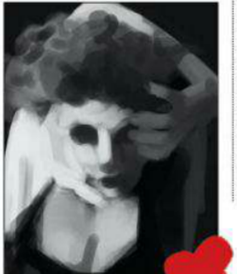
www.marta-dahlig.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/dp-black



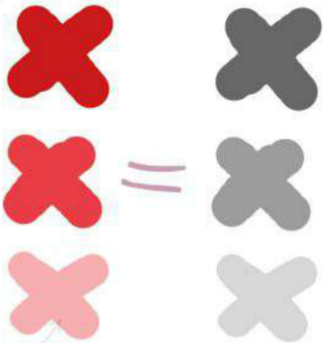
1 Light theory

In greyscale painting, light is your main tool for creating the right mood. This image shows two basic types of lighting. The first is directional – a strong, condensed light emitted from one point. Second, there's ambient light, which is omnipresent and affects every part of the lit object with the same intensity. Then there are two types of shadow. First is the cast shadow, which is created by an object that's blocking light. Second is the form shadow, which is created on the side of an object that's affected by light but facing away from it.



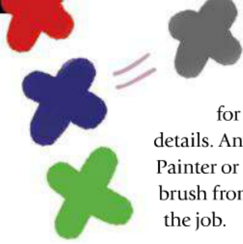
2 Get sketching

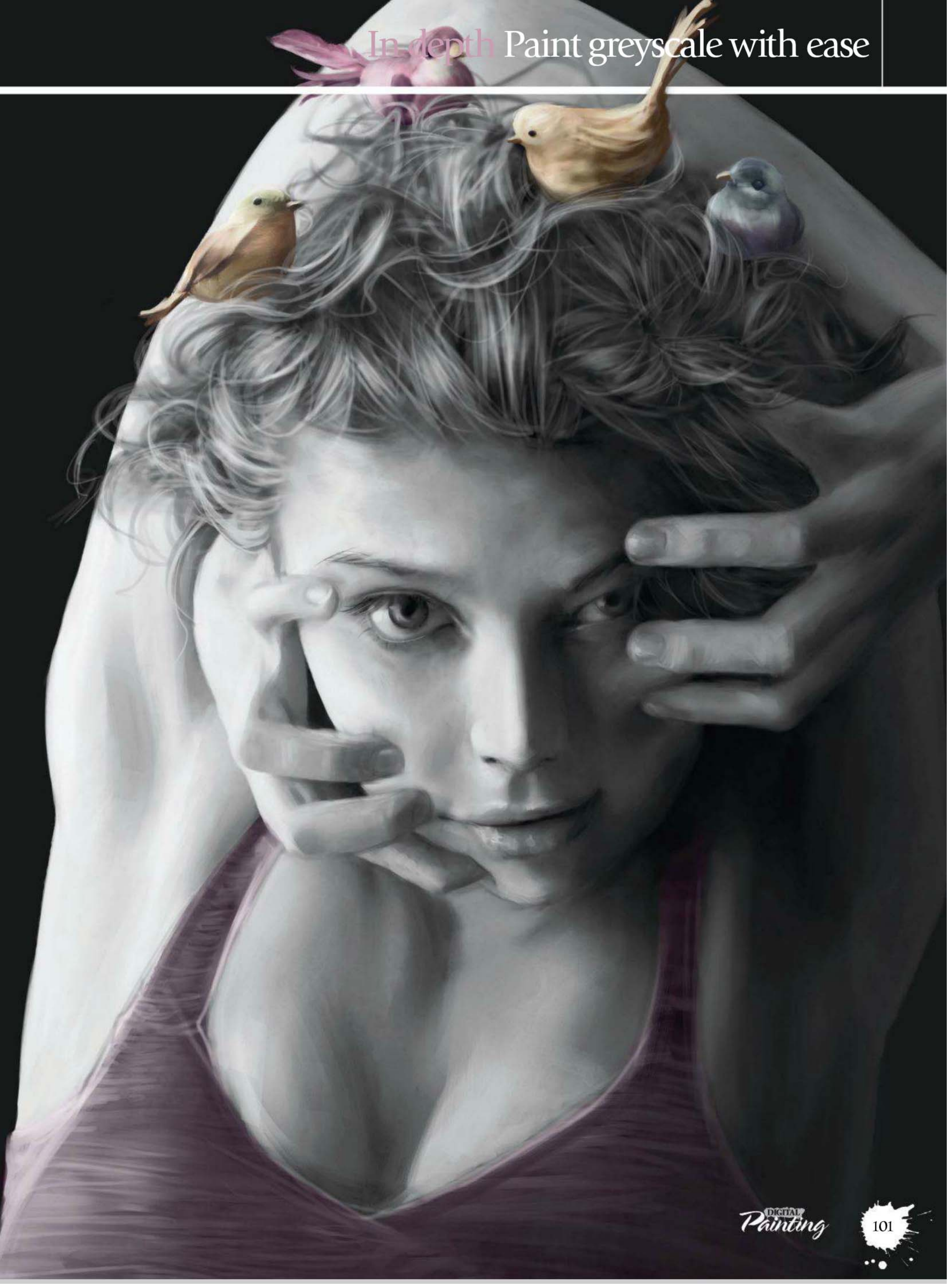
I find it handy to do a quick sketch to help me remember the direction and intensity of a chosen light. I'd recommend using highly textured, opaque brushes for marking shapes in greyscale. I've done this sketch in Painter 7 using a basic round brush and the Loaded Palette Knife with an opacity of between 30 and 50 per cent.



3 Make things clear

One problem that's specific to painting in greyscale is differentiating between elements in an image. Colours with the same saturation and brightness levels will look identical when desaturated. So in greyscale paintings it's crucial to vary lighter and darker elements more than you would when painting in colour. It's also important to make textures and surfaces distinctive. I'll go through some texturing tricks later – for now, use naturally textured brushes as a basis for applying subsequent details. Any Oil brush from Painter or a ragged Hard Round brush from Photoshop will do the job.

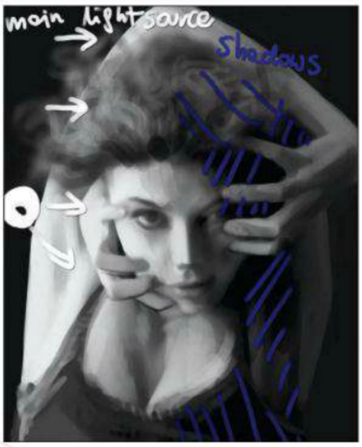




PRO SECRETS

Realistic vs painterly strokes

Choosing a style for a portrait can be difficult and often causes unnecessary hassle. When you can't decide between a painterly and a realistic painting, remember that you can have both at once! Painterly strokes eliminate one style, which is photorealism. There is, however, nothing wrong with achieving a realistic portrait while keeping brush strokes and natural brush textures visible. It's all a matter of hinting and conveying the most important elements of a painting while keeping others to a minimum.

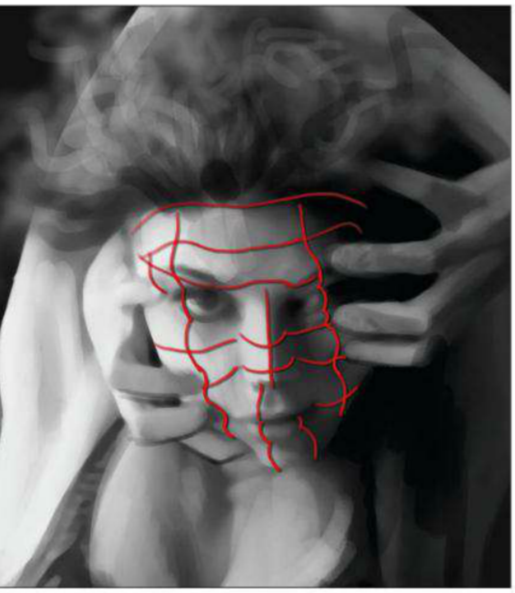


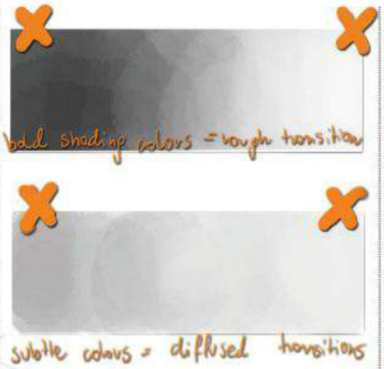
4 Lighting in practice

Once the sketch starts to take shape, pay close attention to where you put your shadows. Because there's no colour to distract attention from the form's shape, painting becomes much like sculpting – every object has to be moulded with great care to remain believable. It's helpful to shade the shapes very generally, applying basic form shadows as you sketch.

5 Ins and outs

When you're satisfied that the basic object is ready, start thinking about detailed shadowing. To create a believable image, every element you shade has to be understood and analysed. Only once you visualise an object in three dimensions will you be able to shade it correctly. To understand the structure of an object better, try painting a basic wireframe on top of your character to highlight the main convexities and concavities of the object's form. In my painting's case, the character is pressing her fingers against her cheeks and this creates a lot of extra structure to deal with.



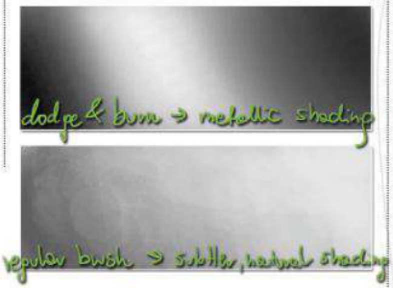

bold shading colours = rough transition
subtle colours = diffused transitions

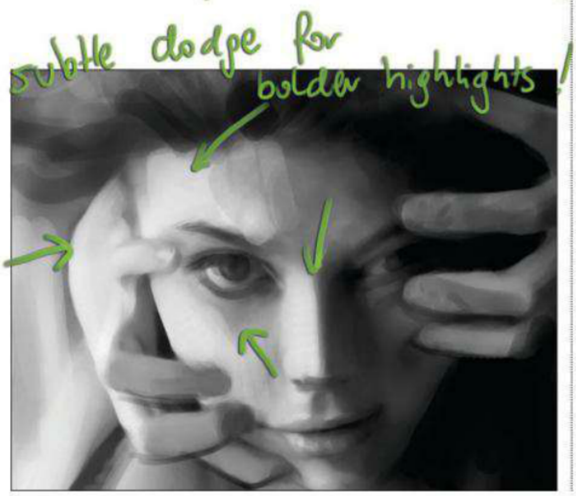
6 Pushing the highlights

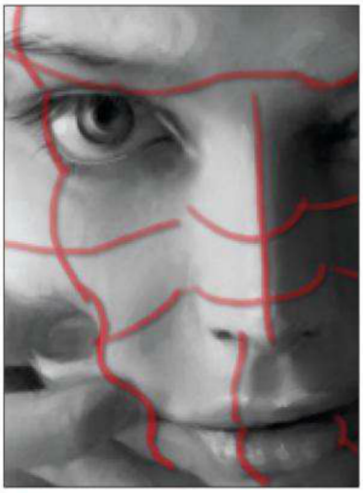
You probably know the general colour-shading rule: never shade with white and black. This also applies to greyscale painting, as adding the strongest shades reduces the effectiveness of your composition, even if you use them on a low opacity. Transition shades should be subtle, with near-white and near-black used only occasionally. The opacity of my enrichment strokes is between 10 and 25 per cent at all times.

7 Dodge and burn

In colour painting, the use of Dodge and Burn is traditionally limited to metal and hair highlights, as well as enriching directional light effects on environmental objects. However, with greyscale there are a few more options available to you, like skin shading. If the character's skin is strongly affected by light, you can dodge – with great care –an extra highlight blob here and there.


dodge & burn → metallic shading
regular brush → subtler, natural shading


subtle dodge for bolder highlights!

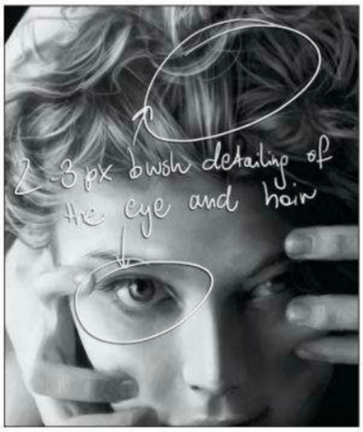


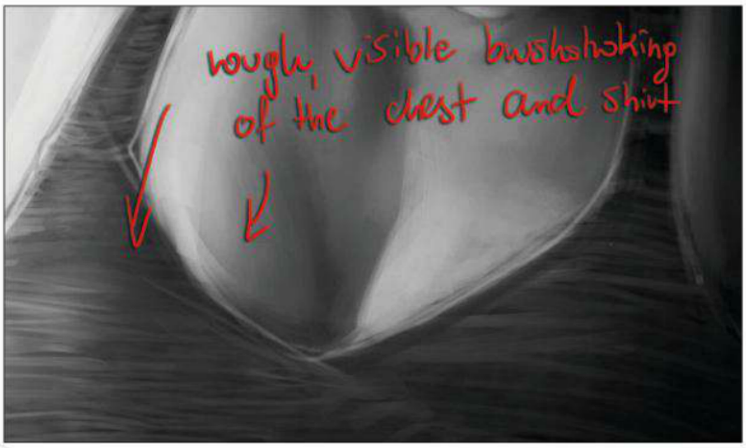
8 Enrichment in practice

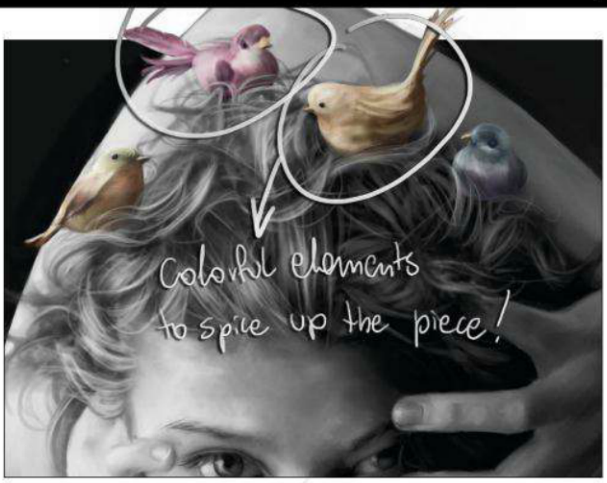
Having learned about colour enrichment rules, it's time to put them into practice. Choose some textured brushes and try to depict all of the face's structural nuances using the wireframe you created earlier. Add darker greys all over the concave areas and lighter greys over the convexities. Try to stick to more textured brushes. If the shading starts looking too rough, blend it in with lower opacity strokes while still using a texture brush. As a general rule, airbrushes should be avoided at this stage of the painting.

9 Basics of stylisation

Once you've settled on your character's basic form, it's a good time to think about detail texturing. Greyscale looks good with a program's more artistic setting, encouraging looser brushstrokes. And perhaps because of bolder light sources, it also boosts the overall realism of the piece, which might be a chance to implement finer detailing and texturing. In my piece, I decide to do a bit of both and detail areas of interest – her eyes and hair – with much more care than other elements. I want to give a more painterly feel to her hands, forehead, elbow and chest to balance the piece stylistically.


2-3 px brush detailing of the eye and hair


rough, visible brushstroking of the chest and shirt

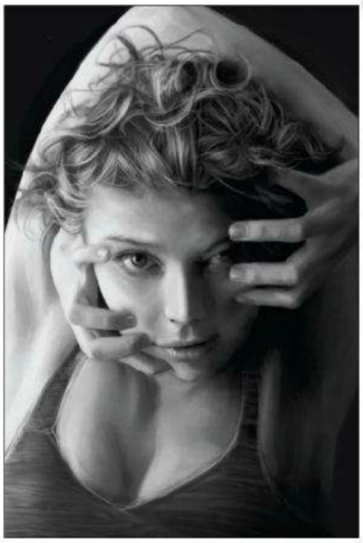

Colorful elements to spice up the piece!

10 Further stylisation

A few good brushes to help you texturise and/or stylise your characters are hard round, opacity and pen-pressure controlled ones in Photoshop, or all types of inks and palette knives in Painter. The key here is to use a multitude of brushes: mix textured with smooth, hard with soft and so on. When finalising the object, introduce some Airbrush strokes to polish any transitions. Remember, harder textures tend to stand out more, so you might want to leave your strokes bolder in the places you most want the viewer to concentrate on. In contrast, broader, smudgy strokes are perfect for areas of

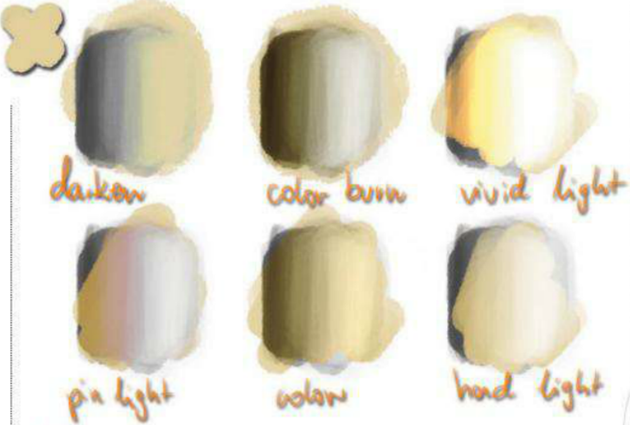
11 Finalising greyscale

If you're finishing the textures in Photoshop, keep your second view window open. It helps you to see how the textures look when zoomed out, and is especially helpful if you're making your image photorealistic. That said, it's a good idea to over-texture the painting by a huge margin. Areas of focus benefit from intense brush texturing. Here I boost the level of detail in the hair significantly, which seems to work just fine.



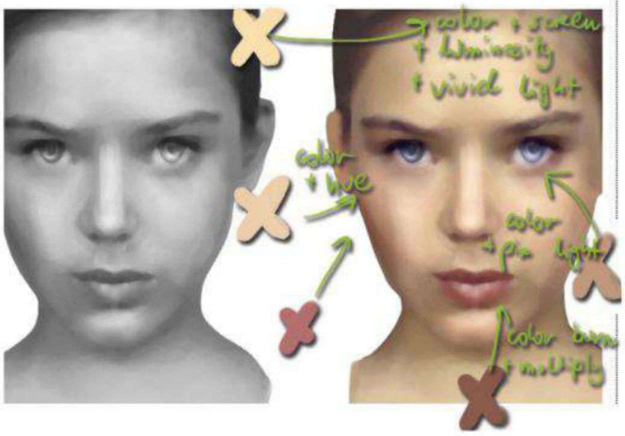
12 Basics of colour application

You can either leave your image greyscale or apply colour to it. If you decide to add colour, first create a new layer. Now you can set the layer's mode to one of your choosing, or you leave the mode on Normal and use brush modes instead. This image shows the same beige colour applied on top of the greyscale with different layer modes.



13 Colour application

Shading human skin is tricky on a greyscale image and there's a good chance that it'll end up looking muddy. First, merge your grey painting for easier layer management. Because the trick to applying colour is using lots of different brush/layer modes, you might want to stick to Brush mode. Create a colour palette: pick a midtone, a couple of midtone enrichment tones as well as a few highlight and shadow hues. Then apply the midtone using Color mode. Once you've done this, start applying shadows on Multiply and Color burn modes on a low opacity. Highlights work best when applied with Screen and Soft light. Finally, use variations of your midtone for colour enrichment, applying strokes in Color, Pin light and Luminosity modes.

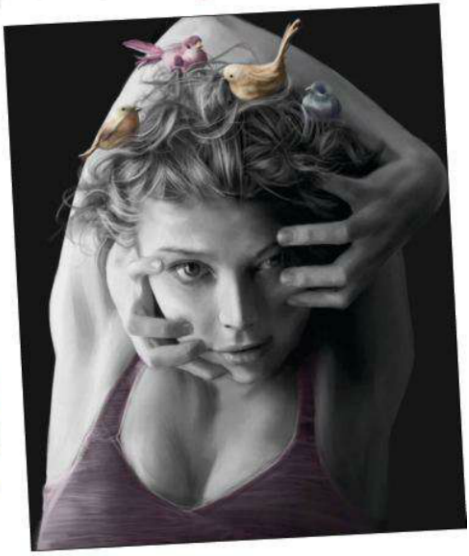


14 Finalising colour application

Of course, colouring greyscale is a matter of preference and different layer modes can be used in different ways, but there's one last thing to remember. If you've created a boldly textured object in black and white, don't use highly textured brushes when applying colour. While a typical airbrush will be too soft and its diffused edges will make it hard to keep to the edges of the coloured objects, a Normal Round brush will be too hard. It's therefore best to use a Hard Round brush in Photoshop with slightly softened edges. Painter's Airbrush will also perform the job well.

15 Final touches

In the end, I decide to mix some colour into my greyscale painting to add emphasis and give the piece balance. After having done these last-minute colour adjustments to the piece, I balance the contrast slightly to strengthen the mood. As a general rule, before finishing I always flip the painting to search for any hidden anatomical errors. Once that's done, I can lay down my pen and consider the painting finished!



VIDEO WORKSHOP
CLICK THE LINK TO VIEW THE VIDEO

Painter & Photoshop

PAINTING BRIGHT AND AIRY INTERIORS

Discover how to work with perspective and use colour and texture to suggest common materials as **Marta Dahlig** creates an indoor scene

Painting interiors can be a bit of a challenge. There are several factors that must be learned and then implemented to create a successful composition.

The first and most fundamental element is perspective. It's simply impossible to paint a believable object without fully understanding its interaction with its surroundings.

The second part is lighting – once you have the elements designed, you should shade them according to a consistent light source and make them interact with each other in terms of colour. For these steps, some theoretical knowledge is required.

Finally, there are colours and textures to consider. Aside from the theoretical knowledge of how to compose the scene, you still have to actually colour and shade it in real life. That's where knowledge and experience of what your software can do comes into play.

The preliminary stage of this painting was created using Photoshop, but the absolute core, the definition process, was done in Painter. I will describe the stages of working in both of these programs and give the reasons why I switched between them during my painting process.

Artist **PROFILE**

Marta Dahlig

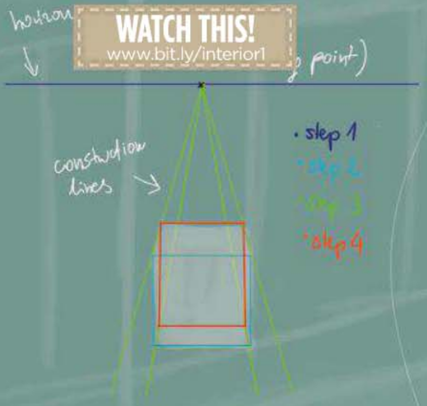
COUNTRY: Poland

Marta is a self-taught artist who focuses mainly on character painting. Aside from working as an illustrator for several publishing houses, she creates concept art for mobile gaming companies.

www.marta-dahlig.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/dp-interior

WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/interior1



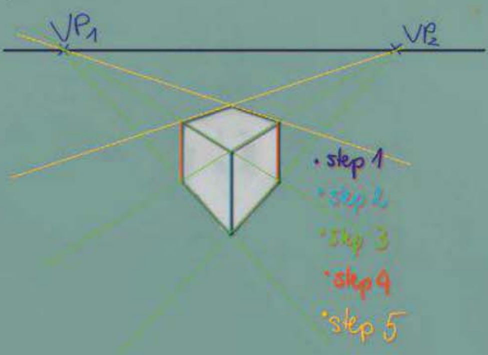
1 One-point perspective

One-point perspective is a situation in which parallel lines converge to one point somewhere in the far distance. This is the vanishing point. One-point perspective is the easiest way to give a painting a feeling of depth and is often used for depicting streets, railroads and so on. To construct a one-point perspective, first draw a horizon line (1) with a spot in the middle of it. (This will be the vanishing point.) Then paint in a rectangle (2) somewhere below the horizon line. Now draw lines connecting the corners of the rectangle with the vanishing point (3). Finally, place a shape connecting those lines (4), while remaining parallel to the edge of the box.

2 Two-point perspective

Two-point perspective is a situation in which you can see a one-point perspective object rotated. In other words, you can depict the same object as in one-point perspective, but also rotate it on another axis – useful when painting interiors. For this, use two vanishing points.

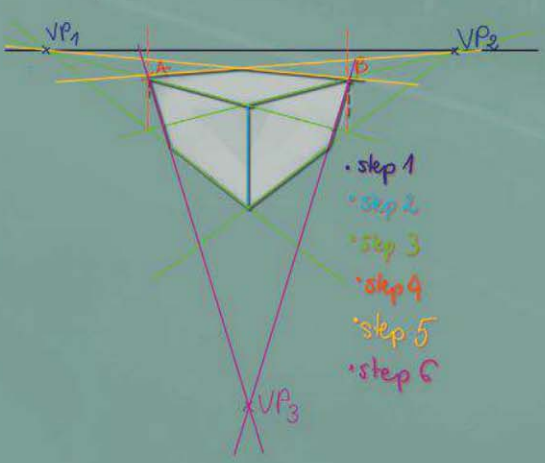
Draw a horizon line with two spots on it, far apart from each other (1). Next, draw a vertical line below the horizon (2), then paint in construction lines from the top and bottom of the line (3) all the way to the vanishing points. Now paint in two additional vertical lines (4). Finally, paint in construction lines from the vanishing points to the other corners (5).

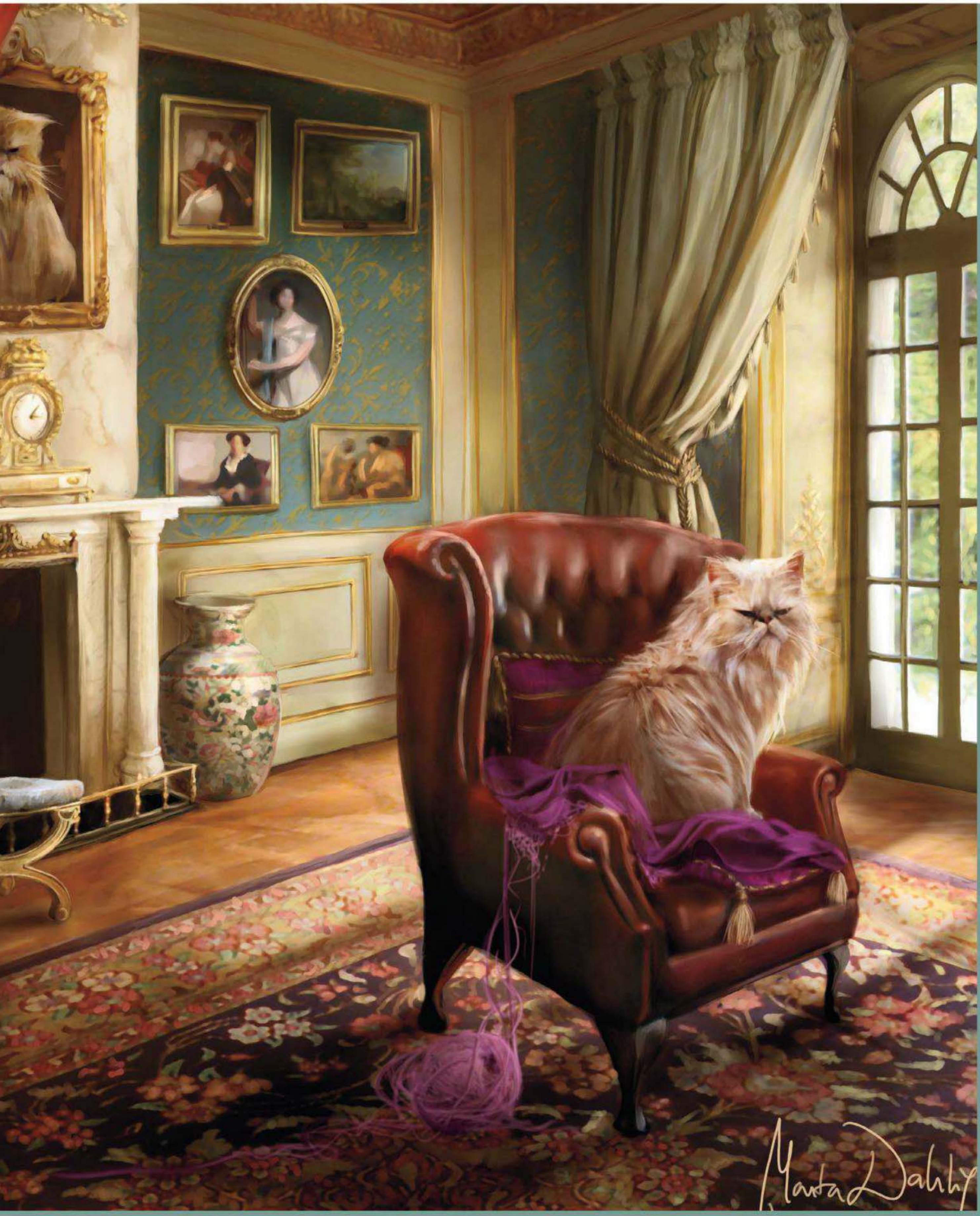


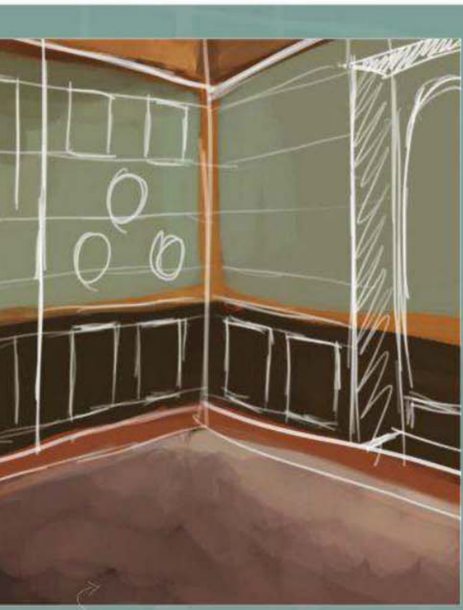
3 Three-point perspective

Three-point perspective is a view where you see the two-point perspective rotated on a third axis. It's useful when painting a building from above or below.

To paint an object in this way, paint in the horizon with two vanishing points (1); a vertical line (2); construction lines linking it with vanishing points (3); and the extra vertical lines simulating walls (4). Do the last step with a dashed line, since the only needed parts are the intersections (points A and B). Now, connect A and B with the vanishing points (5). Paint in a third vanishing point below the vertical line and connect A and B with it (6).




Marta Dahlig



4 Preliminary sketching

I think you have enough of the theory now, so let's move on to practice. Interior scenes usually use two-point perspectives, and that is exactly what I'm creating here. After sketching in the basic two-point perspective lines, I create a basic scene layout. As you can see, I'm not using generated lines, unlike in the previous exercises. I do not care for too technical a look and want to keep this scene looking painterly.

5 Light source issues

Still using Photoshop, I sketch in a basic light source and some coloured blobs to enrich the raw look. The light source is a basic ambient light with additional directional illumination. As far as the directional light goes, I'm not too scientific. The length of the window's shadow should technically be determined by the position of the sun, but as long as the angle is okay, I'm fine with it as it is.

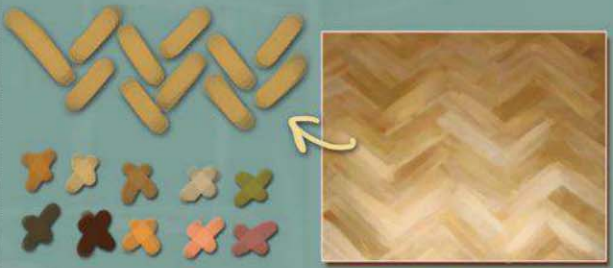
Shortcuts

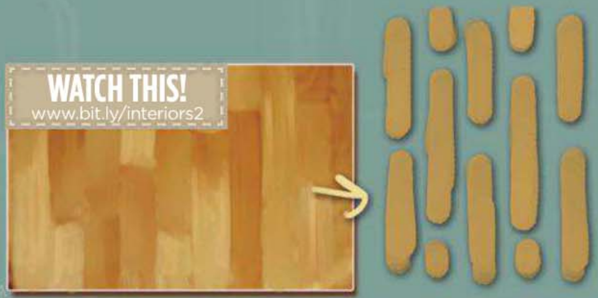
Add layer

Ctrl+Shift+N (PC)

Cmd+Shift+N (Mac)

Use this shortcut in Painter to quickly create and select a new layer to paint on.

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6 Dealing with wood

To work on textures, I move the image into Painter: it encourages less particular strokes in my workflow than Photoshop, and is amazing for hinting at detail rather than strengthening it.

Wood is among the most common surfaces you'll see, so it's good to know how to paint it in quickly. In interiors, you usually won't have to texture a wooden plank up close: just knowing the tricks for painting panelled floors will be enough.

What you do is apply colours, scattering shades over the floor to simulate wood's natural variations. I create a wood palette with my regular 'use brush modes on top of a midtone' method. My favourite brushes for this are Bristle Oils, with Basic Round for tinting. Strokes should be short and linear.

7 Patterns

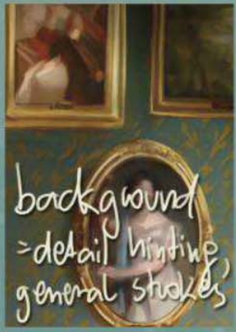
To make patterns work, I first roughly shade the base that the pattern is to lie upon. In this case, I just added some rough highlights and shadows to the carpet. Then I add a layer and sketch in my shape with a clean, textureless brush. (An unscattered Pen will do.)

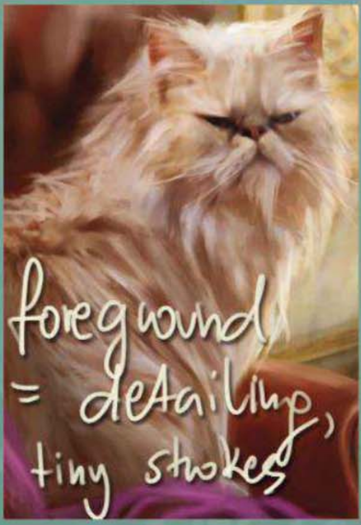
I copy and paste the shape around, resizing and rotating it to create a more intricate pattern. Then I change the perspective (Edit>Free Transform). I know it's cheating, but it makes mistakes easier to correct. Then I lower the opacity of the blobs and run over them with a very smeary brush (Oily Bristle smoothed by Blender Bristle from Artist's Oils, perhaps), adding in strokes of varying colours. This is to simulate the colour variations and texture of the carpet.

8 Pushing it further

Next up is the seemingly tricky carpet and wallpaper, which are going to be heavily patterned. Using the pattern technique I described earlier, I sketch in some basic carpet and wallpaper blobs and define the fireplace, curtain and chair a bit more.

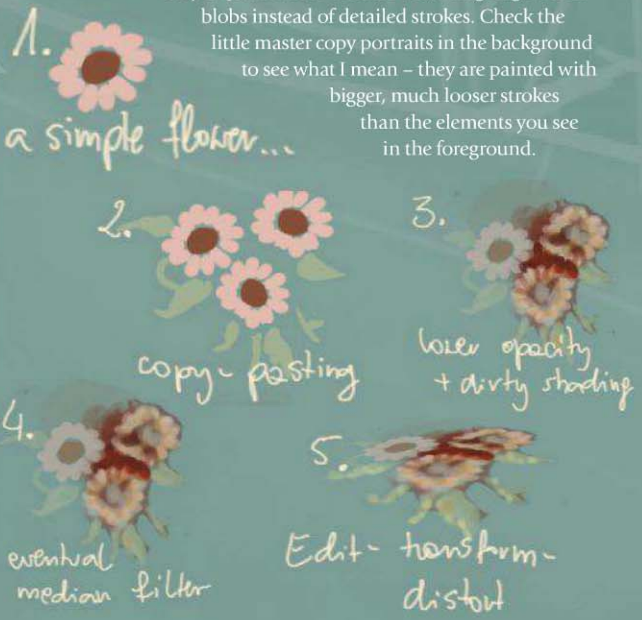
For the wallpaper, I quickly jump back into Photoshop and create a basic canvas texture on top of it to break up the smooth, uniform look. You can perform this process in Painter as well by choosing Effect>Surface Control>Apply Surface Texture, but I'm just used to working with Photoshop filters.

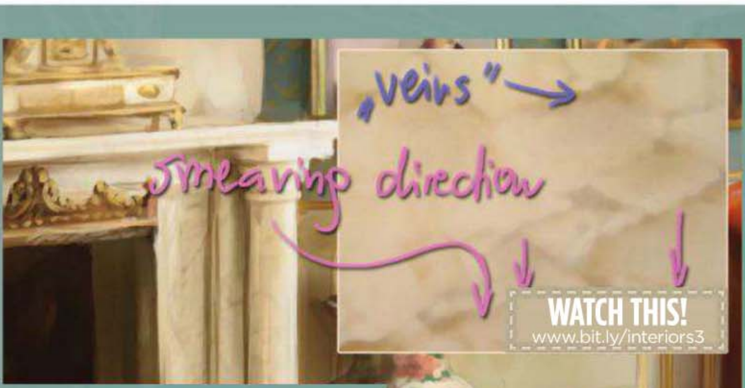




9 Detail focus

Another fundamental rule when creating a feeling of depth is not to go overboard with background details. It not only speeds up your work, because you don't spend time painting every last pixel in the background, but you also create a focus blur effect, which might be a cool addition to the painting. You can do this in two ways. For outdoor scenes, I find the Blur tool useful, whereas for indoor scenes I try to paint when zoomed out, using huge colour blobs instead of detailed strokes. Check the little master copy portraits in the background to see what I mean – they are painted with bigger, much looser strokes than the elements you see in the foreground.


1. a simple flower...
2. copy-pasting
3. lower opacity + dirty shading
4. eventual median filter
5. Edit-transform-distort



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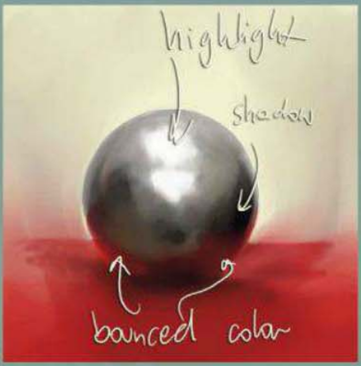


10 Basics of metal shading

The basics of shading metal are the same as for any curved surface exposed to a light source. You have the regular form shadow, which is a shade created on the side of an object that is simply not exposed to lighting. In addition, you have the bounced off lighting on the very edge of the shape.

There are two important distinctions when shading metal: first, the highlights are much bolder; second, the bounce light (and therefore colour) effect is also much stronger, and its saturation is comparable to the saturation of the original object's hue. Don't use Burn and Dodge to shade metal from scratch. While they can be useful for strengthening existing shading, you'll want to do it manually at first so it doesn't look obviously Photoshopped.

11 Gold in practice

In some cases, it's enough just to hint at the metallic colour. See the gold ornaments or small gold frames in the final image to see what I mean.

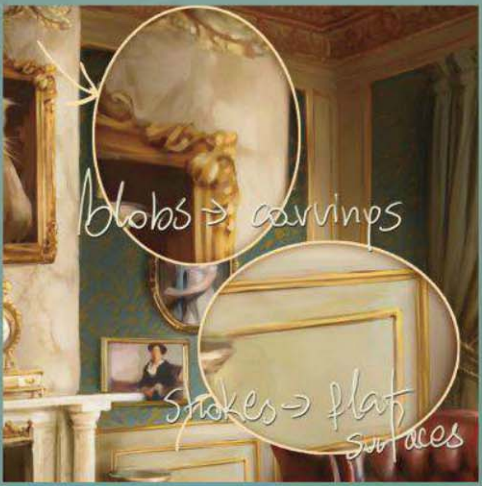
Gold is a mix of yellows, browns and khaki greens. To quickly simulate a flat golden element, paint a yellow stripe, with a bold lemon-yellow highlight in its middle and green-brownish shadows on the edges. For more intricate designs (including the huge cat portrait), use contrasting coloured blobs on top of each other, paint it dark brown and put light yellow blobs on top of it. This only works for looser paintings and will simulate carvings when seen from afar. An Airbrush or well-blended Oil will do just fine.

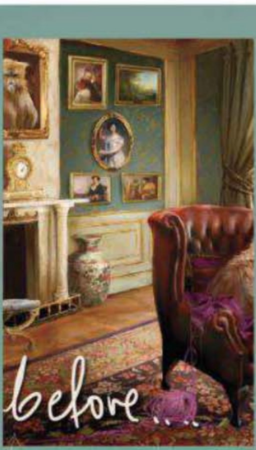
12 Shading rock: marble

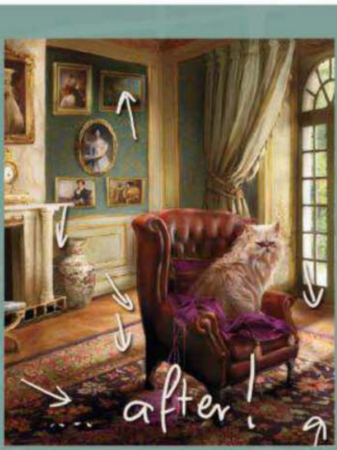
Another surface detail that might be helpful when doing interiors is marble. What you should do is pick a smeary brush (the Wet Detail brush from Acrylics, for example) and add in dark, vein-like shapes. Afterwards, run over the area with a blender, smearing only one side of the vein. Between the veins, add in some colour variations, relying on brightness and saturation changes instead of hue changes. Highlights can be underlined by bold and yellow lights smeared across the area. Be sure to use only oily brushes for this particular stage.

13 Drop shadows and cast shadows

It's vital that elements in your painting interact. You can create a feeling of depth through perspective, but if you forget about adding lighting interaction, it will all end up looking artificial. Nothing will add as much to the three-dimensional feel of the piece as appropriately added shadows and highlights. Aside from form shadows (areas not exposed to light), you also have cast shadows, which are formed by elements exposed to the light source.







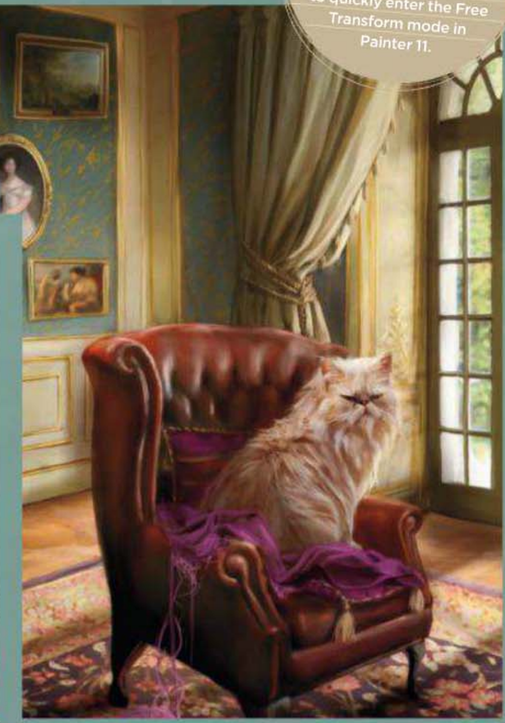
14 Shadows: before and after

To demonstrate the rule from the earlier step, I refrain from painting in any bigger cast shadows during my working process. Do you see how flat it all looks? Successive elements, despite a common light source, seem copied and pasted in and altogether it just doesn't look right. I open up a layer and, using Multiply and Normal modes, I airbrush in the necessary shading that's lacking. Doesn't it instantly seem so much better?

15 Final image

After painting in the vital parts of the image, it's always a good idea to search for things to improve. I flatten the layers, load the piece back into Photoshop and quickly Dodge (with Airbrush set to Highlights) the most highlighted part of the image to strengthen the light source. It's a subtle stage and has to be done with care – too much Dodge and it will look artificial. After that, I take one final look and consider myself done… Whew!

Shortcuts
Free Transform
Ctrl+Alt+T (PC)
Cmd+Alt+T (Mac)
This shortcut enables you to quickly enter the Free Transform mode in Painter 11.



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CORE SKILLS

Artist Q&A

OUR EXPERTS EASE YOUR ART-ACHE…

DIGITAL Painting THE PANEL

Remko Troost

Born in Amsterdam, Remko is a senior concept artist and illustrator with several years' experience in the film and video game industries.

www.remkotroost.com

Matt Dixon

Matt first created artwork for a video game back in 1988, and has since worked for Blizzard. His pin-up art can be seen in his book Girls On Top.

mattdixon.co.uk

Jace Wallace

A Ringling College of Art and Design graduate, Jace freelances for magazines and books, and produces concept art, including for Sims 3.

www.wakkawa.cghub.com

Mélanie Delon

Mélanie is a freelance fantasy illustrator. She works as a cover artist for several publishing houses, and on her personal artbook series.

melaniedelon.com

Lauren K Cannon

Lauren is a freelance fantasy artist who specialises in the surreal. She lives in a small woodland village in New Jersey, US.

www.navate.com

Donglu Yu

Donglu is a concept artist at Ubisoft Montreal. She's worked on Deus Ex: Human Revolution, as well as the Assassin's Creed franchise.

www.donglu-littlefish.blogspot.ca

> “You can never draw enough hands, they are almost like little creatures on their own. I often scribble them on my phone, or on pieces of paper”
>
> Remko Troost, page 110

ASK THE EXPERTS

Tips and advice from the pros

How can I make hands less stiff looking?
Breathe life into your hand drawings with Remko Troost.

Can I use Photoshop to emulate acrylic or oil?
Matt Dixon shares his knowledge of using Photoshop brushes.

How do I paint different types of skin translucency?
Learn how to create translucent effects with Jace Wallace.

How can I create elaborate flowers and petals?
Mélanie Delon talks through her process when painting flowers.

Can you help me paint better mouths?
Give your characters lifelike lips with Mélanie Delon's advice.

How do I create a fog-laden composition?
Donglu Yu's guide to painting foggy scenes in Photoshop.

How do I make a flying creature look realistic?
Draw convincing animals in flight with Lauren K Cannon.

How can I combine my reference photos?
Donglu Yu's tips and advice on using photo resources.

Question
My hands always seem slightly stiff. What can I do to make them look full of life?

Answer
Remko replies

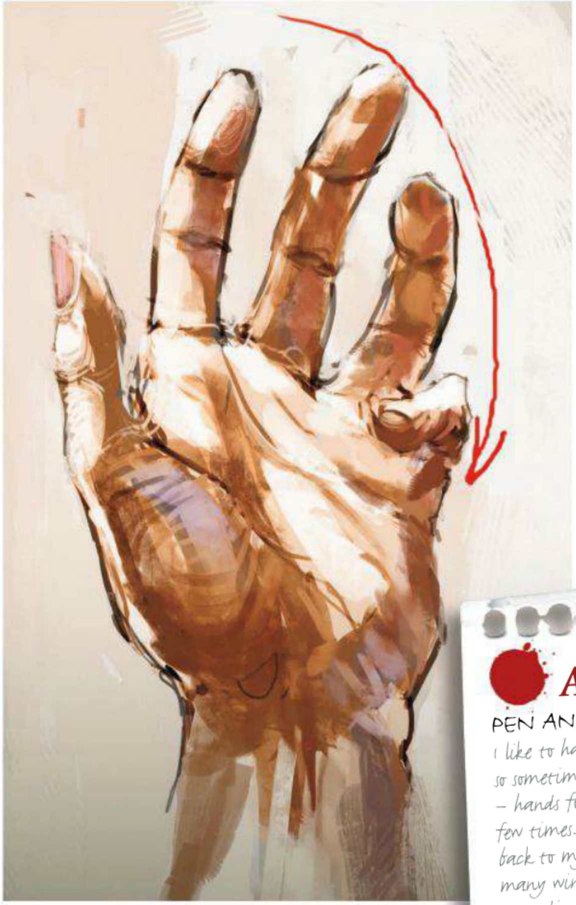
Hands are probably one of the most complicated (yet fun) parts of the body to draw and to master. Observing hands and finding references plays a major role in mastering them.

You can never draw enough hands, and they are almost like little creatures on their own – think of Thing from The Addams Family if you don't believe me! Between my work I often scribble hands here and there, on my phone or on pieces of paper. This constant attention enables me to better understand how they work, such as how they grab something, how they manipulate their environment, how the fingers wrap around a sword handle, or how the knuckles are lined up when making a fist.

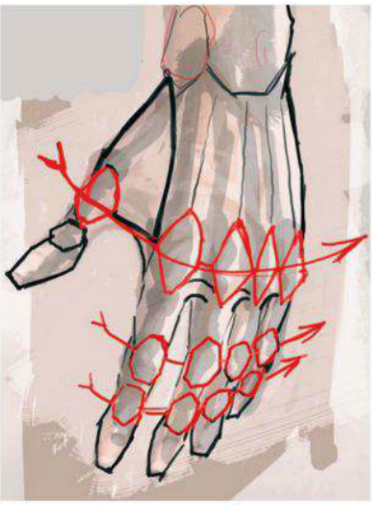
When making a fist, it's not only the fingers that fold but the palm as well. If you close your hand, the little finger goes first and the part of the hand where the little finger is attached folds towards the inside of the palm, too.

I sometimes put my left hand into a certain position and draw it with my right hand if I'm not sure of how the hand should be depicted in any given situation. Don't forget that on the back of your hand, in between the wrist and the fingers, you can often see the bones under the skin as well as some veins passing over the bones. You'll probably also notice the wrinkles on your knuckles and the skin colour variations, depending on how thin or thick the skin is on certain parts. Taking all this into account can breathe a lot of life into your hand drawings.

To make the hands of your characters look less stiff, try not to use too many straight lines while drawing them. Have you noticed that knuckles, for example, aren't perfectly lined up next to each other and that your fingers are not all the same length. Try drawing them in outlines before painting and colouring them. Do this over and over again, until you understand their shapes.



You can see a couple of force lines, drawn in red, that I made to better understand the way they work. As you can see, knuckles or phalanges aren't perfectly lined up next to each other.



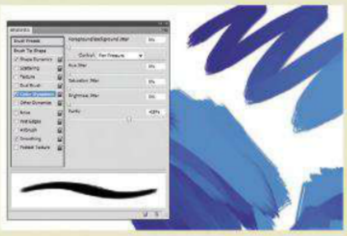
Try putting your hand in all kinds of positions while drawing them fast. It's a great exercise to better understand hands. Try different lighting, too.

Artist's secret

PEN AND PAPER

I like to have some paper handy around my Wacom and PC, so sometimes when I'm having a hard time on a subject – hands for example – I can quickly scribble the subject a few times. Once I feel that I've mastered its shapes, I get back to my screen and go on painting. I avoid having too many windows open at the same time – it's fun and rewarding jumping from one media to another!

Question
How can I set a Photoshop brush to emulate acrylic or oil?

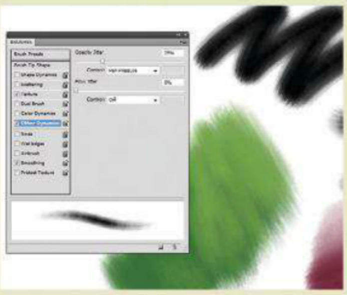


This wet paint effect is useful to add interest when blocking in colour, but can be difficult to manage for finer work.

Answer
Matt replies

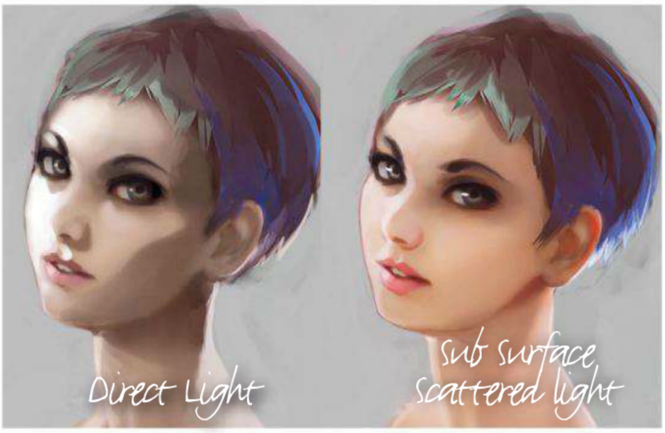
When people think of an oil paint look, they picture a heavy application of opaque colour with a distinct wet blend effect. Begin by selecting an appropriate brush tip. I'm using Charcoal 59 from the default Natural Brushes brush set. Set Shape Dynamics to be controlled by Pen Pressure, with a diameter of around 50 per cent. This will emulate the bristles splaying out as pressure is applied. To achieve the colour mix effect, set Color Dynamics to also be controlled by Pen Pressure. Photoshop will now blend between your foreground and background colours based on pressure.

That brush gives an effective wet paint feel, but isn't easy to work with, so try creating a brush with a drier feel. A less-dense brush tip will give softer edges. I have chosen Spray 68 again from the Natural Brushes set. This time set Opacity to be controlled by Pen Pressure, and set a small amount of Opacity Jitter. In addition, set Texture on, choosing a light texture set to Color Burn mode. These settings make the application of colour more predictable, and the soft edges of the brush make it straightforward to blend tones.



Experiment with different textures as they can change the feel of a brush. If a texture's too strong, you can rein it in using the Depth slider.

Question
I love Jace Wallace's portraits – how does he get the skin translucency?



Light is tricky to control, but if you know how surfaces react it's easier. Here we see different surface properties under the same light.

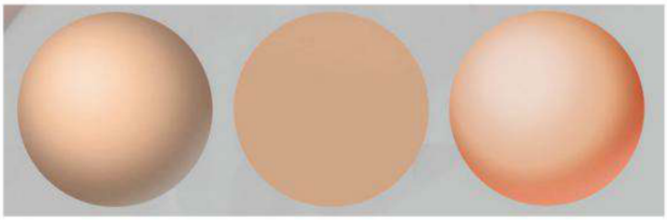
Answer
Jace replies

Thank you Stefan! Painting skin translucency is all about understanding how light travels through materials and what happens to that light when it exits the object. Warm and cool flesh tones are the result of sub-surface scattering, which is when light enters a translucent body, bounces around, then exits at every angle. This causes an inner glow effect and can be seen on a lot of objects.

In the first figure the skin isn't translucent. When light hits it, it bounces off and keeps the same hue, with varying tints and shades. Since the light is only directly reflecting off the surface the shadows and highlights are sharp and harsh.

In the second figure the skin has a translucent surface. When light hits this figure it passes through the skin and goes into the insides of the girl's face. The light will then bounce around in the muscles, blood and anything else there, before exiting in random directions.

What happens is the white light gets absorbed and the light's remaining colour bounces out. The hue becomes more saturated in the shades while the highlights remain less saturated. Highlights are washed out and since the figure is being lit from the inside, shadows become diffused. Less dense parts of the face, especially the nose, ears, lips and cheeks, become brighter and more saturated.



These spheres show the colour difference between a non-translucent surface and a translucent one. The shadows are much more saturated in the translucent sphere. The colour selector shows what happens to the colour, from highlights to shadows, on different surfaces.

Artist's secret

SUB-SURFACE LIGHTING

A quick way to get something to look like it's translucent in Photoshop is to select a cool, bright colour for the highlight. Then, either on a new layer, or in the brush options, select the Overlay option. Try not to overuse this method though.

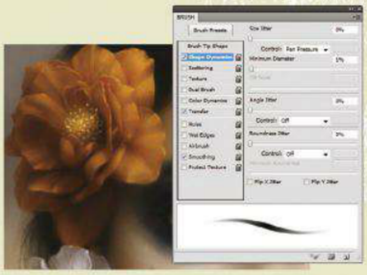
Question
How can I create elaborate flower structures and petal textures?

Answer
Mélanie replies

Whether you're painting simple or complex-looking fantasy flowers, the process is still the same. Once I have an idea of the flower I want to paint I do a bit of research, so that I have some solid references for the painting.

Next I quickly do a basic sketch of the flower – this could be a line art or colour block sketch. This step is important because I need to have a strong base structure for the flower. Once the base is in place I begin the real sketch and refine the overall shape of the flower, including its petals.

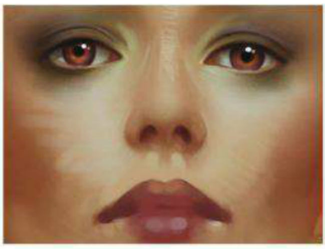
Petals are probably the most difficult aspect of the flower to paint. Bear in mind that they're never straight, and that they're a thin and fragile element of the flower. As such, the border must look delicate and I always add some irregularities, or small waves, for extra realism.



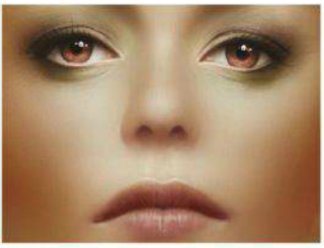
Increasing the border of the petals with a basic Round brush set to Dynamic shape sharpens the look of my flower.

Once the petals are in place I add some texture to them, using a Spackled brush for the larger part of the petal. The petals aren't totally smooth and this brush will give me the prefect base for the texture. I blur some parts to integrate the texture with the flower. After that I simply add some dots of colour on the top of the petals.

Question
My character's mouth lacks fullness and realism. Can you help?



I adjust the colours to add volume to the lips. The middle of the mouth is usually more saturated than the edges.



I add some details to make the lips more lifelike, such as dots of light on the lower lips where the light is more intense.

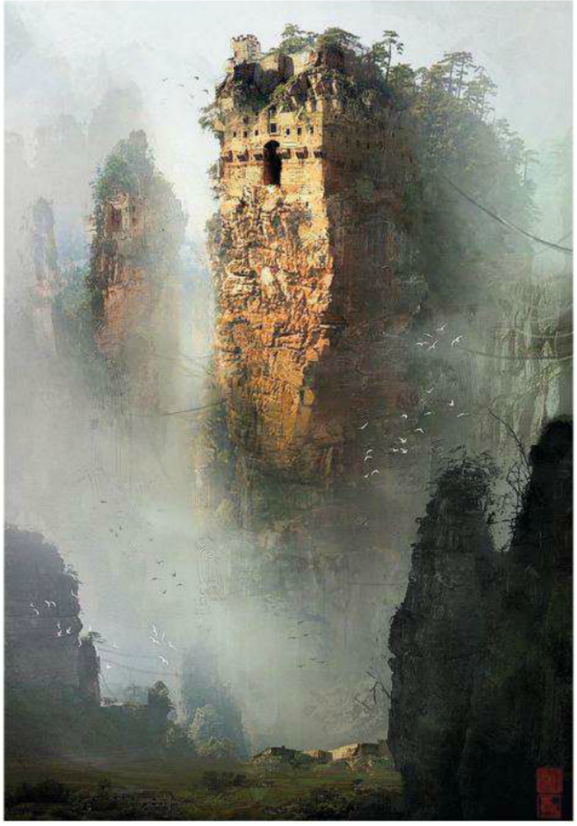
Answer
Mélanie replies

All you need to do after sketching the lips is to play with the light and shadows. Usually the lower lip will catch a lot the light, while the upper one remains in the shadows. I start colouring lips with a mid-tone base – I've chosen a brown fuchsia as my main colour. Then I add the shadows, usually on the corner of the lips, which is the darkest part of the mouth. The middle area of the upper lips shouldn't be too dark because this part also catches the light.

With the shadows in place, I add light, concentrating on the middle of the bottom and lower lips where the mouth is at its fullest. I also apply some subtle light to the lower corner of the lips and on the top of the lower one, which helps to define the volume of the mouth. Finally, I blend those shades together.

Question

How do I use Photoshop to construct an epic, fog-laden composition?



I have a vague idea of painting some massive structure in a foggy set before starting the work. I usually don't start with a rigid pencil line sketch, because it limits the fun of the creation process.

Answer

Donglu replies

It's crucial to have two or three fog/cloud brushes at the ready in Photoshop, so that you can create the desired foggy effect. Don't simply use those brushes to draw – also use them to erase and paint over layer masks to introduce subtle nuances in the fog area.

During this process, don't be afraid to leave the fog at 100 per cent Opacity in some areas. This doesn't only make the foggy scene more believable, but it can also simplify a few details in the painting and give the viewer's eyes spots to rest upon.

It's also useful to study the natural behaviour of the mist by observing photo references. You'll soon notice how objects disappear in the background as they get further away from the viewer, and the details on those objects decrease accordingly or just completely disappear at some point.

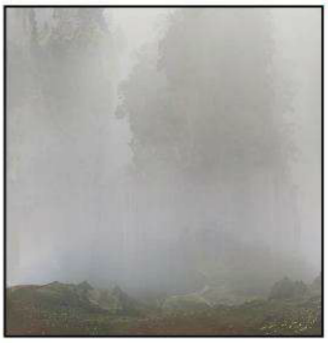
Generally speaking, there are two different kinds of misty scenes in nature: one without any direct light source, composed by overlapping layers of monochromatic tones; or the type with a medium intensity of sunlight breaking through the fog. They're both interesting to play with. In my example, I've chosen to give it a sunlight source hitting the top of the mountain to give it a golden-tone touch. This can also make the subject matter pop out from the mist.

Artist's secret

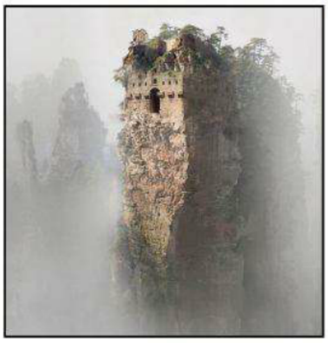
OBSERVING REAL LIFE

Observing and photographing nature and studying it carefully can bring you endless surprises, and one day you may suddenly realise how dramatically you've improved in portraying those natural environments.

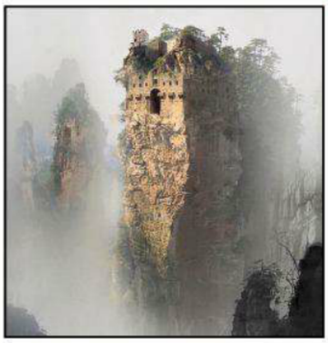
Step-by-step: Paint a foggy scene



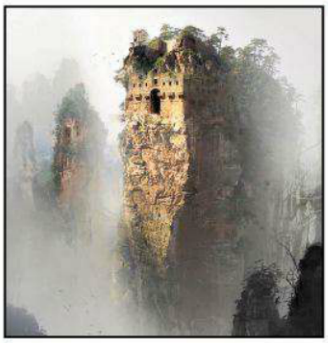
1 I layer grey tones on the canvas to suggest the mist using my cloud/fog brushes. The Gradient tool leaves the image too digital-looking, so I tend to avoid it for this purpose. I'm doing this step roughly, because the goal is to generate composition ideas, not to set a rigid start point. I also use some photo texture as the ground so I can gauge a rough idea of the scale.



2 Then I start to paint a huge castle that's built on top of the mountain. I look through reference photos that I gathered or photographed to find interesting rock texture and architecture references. It's impossible to get it right first time so I have fun playing around with different elements. I use the Free Transform tool intensively until I find some intricate shapes.

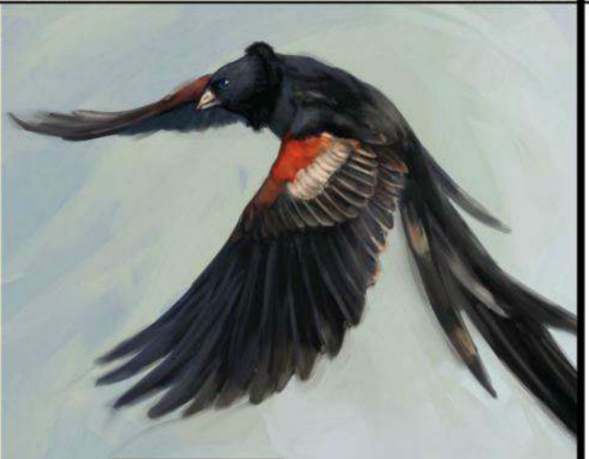


3 Adding some darker foreground shapes keeps the viewer focused on the castle. Such shapes also increase the contrast range in the painting without disturbing the mist effect. It's essential to keep some areas of the fog at 100 per cent Opacity, such as at the base of the main mountain. Adding extra details in these areas would dilute the atmospheric effect of the mist.

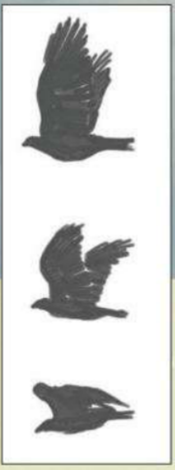


4 I increase the intensity of the direct sunlight, using value contrast. This can further enhance the feel of the mist effect at the mountain's base. I push some elements further away by painting over them with the cloud brush, and add some foreground branch details. Finally, I paint a few birds to give an indication of scale – something that's always useful in landscape scenes.

Question
How do I make a flying creature look realistic?



Consider the animal's body language when showing an animal in flight. Motion blur can help add to the illusion of being airborne.



One of the best ways to better understand how a creature's body looks while it's flying is to study wing motions in different real-world creatures.

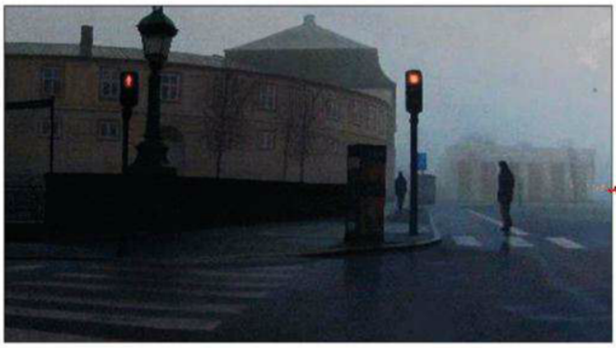
Answer
Lauren replies

You'll need to consider a few different things to ensure that your creature looks convincing while pictured in flight. Think about the overall design and proportions, what kind of wings the beast has and what sort of movements those wings have to make to keep the creature aloft. For example, a vulture's wings move very differently from a hummingbird's, even though the basic structure is the same in both creatures.

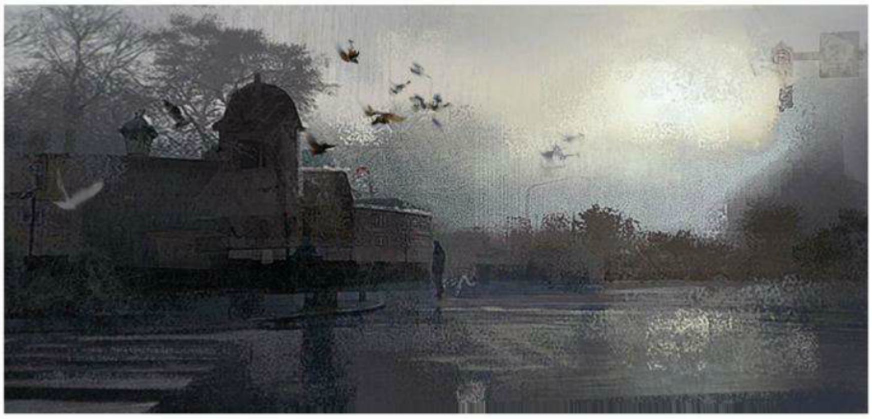
If you're trying to depict a fantasy creature, then you want to make the wings appear big and strong enough to support the creature. Alternatively, if they're comically undersized, have them flap extremely quickly to compensate! The film How to Train Your Dragon is worth a look for inspiration, because the wing movements and shapes vary across each breed of dragon according to what their body looks like.

If you're just trying to depict a natural creature, make sure you understand how the wings move to support flight. Make motion studies – not just of the wing positions, but also the animal's body. The spine, shoulders, tail and legs all play a part in creating proper posture for a creature in flight.

Question
I've got loads of reference photos. How can I make something using them all in one image?



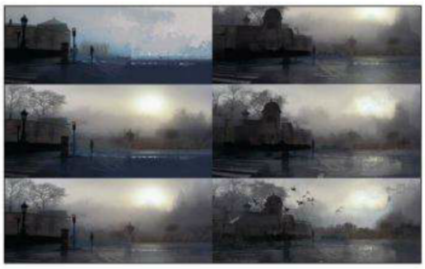
Here you can see the original photo with which I started the whole process. In the final image, you can almost find no trace of the original, except the base shape for the building.



Answer
Donglu replies

It's certainly great to have a lot of photo resources, but you can quickly become overwhelmed and be left wondering how to use them effectively. I find it helpful to classify all the photo references I collect into the following categories: mood (for lighting schemes), structural shapes (for composition ideas) and details (for refining purposes).

Within each main category you can have many sub-categories: for example, morning, sunset, night time, fog, sunrise and cloudy, all for the mood category; city, forest, village, desert, tunnel, modern building and historical architecture for the structural shapes; and finally, mechanics, engines, branches and construction parts for the details category.



In six steps I changed the canvas size, lighting source, reflection on the ground, overall Level adjustment, then added touches of highlights for a coherent final image.

I find that the trick to combining photos is to break them down in terms of composition, lighting and scale. Don't use them as they are, because you'd be restricted by the existing information rather then be able to use them to your artistic advantage.

Let's think of a few examples. Take a close-up of a car engine with all the mechanical details. Scale it up and transform it, and it can easily become a huge mechanical structure in a sci-fi city. You've got a nice rock photo? Rotate it, flip it and use it as a mountain. You like the lighting in a store reference picture, but want to make an interesting painting out of it? Change the image size, paint around the store, give it a cityscape setting and you'll have made something completely different.

Artist's secret

TRAIN THE VISUAL MEMORY

When I want to improve my artistic abilities and take a break from painting, I just look through all my reference photos. With time, you can effectively train your visual memory, so that when you want to tackle certain subject matters, interesting shapes and patterns will automatically come to mind.

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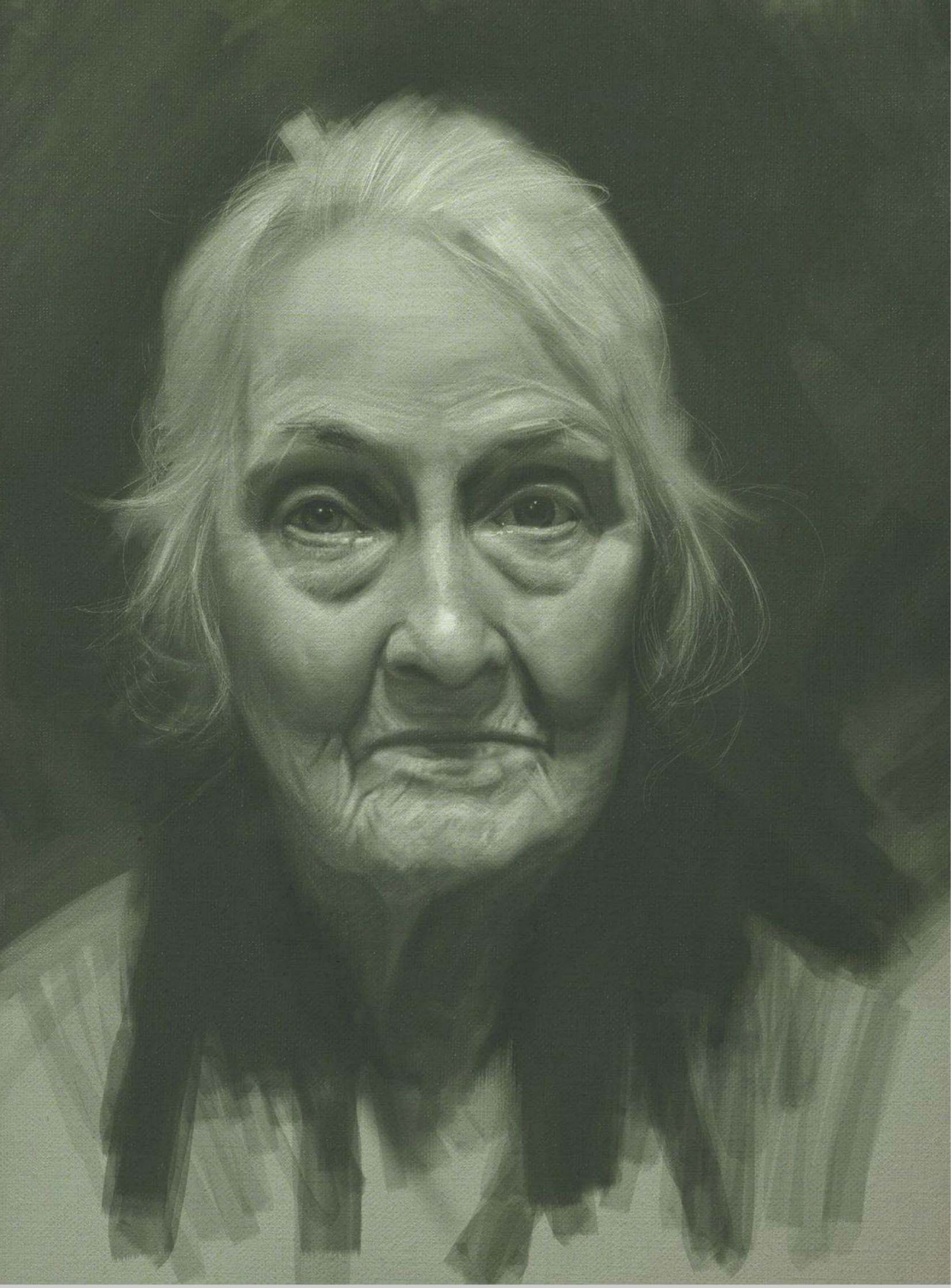

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